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DOMESTIC ARCHITECTURE IN IMPERIAL ROME

A Documentation of Ostian Evidence

BY



KRYSTYNA EILEEN SPIRYDOWICZ


A THESIS

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DOMESTIC ARCHITECTURE IN IMPERIAL ROME

A Documentation of Ostian Evidence

submitted by Krystyna Eileen Spirydowicz in partial
fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master
of Arts.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to discover as many facts as possible concerning the domestic architecture of Imperial Rome. The well-preserved remains of Ostia provide the most numerous examples of dwellings and shops from the period of the Empire. The close proximity of the two cities ensured mutual influence, so that the evidence from Ostia can be safely applied to Rome. Ancient sources testify that the buildings of the capital were poorly constructed and as such, could not have compared with the sturdy brick structures of Ostia, preserved even today, as high as the third storey. However in all other respects, the domestic architecture of the two cities seems to have been similar, if not identical.

Corroborating evidence is provided by the regionary catalogues, which list the total number of houses and apartment blocks in each region of fourth century Rome, and by the Forma Urbis, a marble plan of the city dating from the time of Septimius Severus. On the plan are incised numerous examples of houses, shops and apartment blocks resembling in their layouts the extant remains at Ostia.

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this thesis is to examine remains of apartment buildings, private houses and shops in Ostia and to ascertain how closely they copied Roman models. The city of Rome has been continuously occupied throughout the centuries, consequently there are few traces of ancient private dwellings or business establishments. Ostia however, was abandoned in the fourth century and left to ruin. Her buildings of sturdy brick construction have been preserved as high as the third storey. Numerous examples give an accurate picture of each of the different building types. Because of the close proximity of the two cities, one can safely assume similar building styles although not necessarily similar quality of materials or construction methods.

The first chapter of this thesis discusses ancient references to the architecture of Rome. There is little description of the buildings themselves or of the mechanics of construction, although Martial and Juvenal complain at length about the discomforts of city life. The meaning of the two words insula and cenaculum is also discussed.

Chapter II outlines from Ostian evidence, the characteristics of an insula. Three types are clearly discernable: the building with a single facade as typified by the Insula dell'Ercole Bambino and the Insula del Soffitto Dipinto; the building with an internal courtyard, which

allows a greater diffusion of light, as in the Casa del Larario; the giant apartment block with an inner courtyard and several floors of apartments rising above a row of shops, as in the Casa del Serapide. There are short descriptions of each of the examples mentioned above.

Chapter III is devoted entirely to the Case della Via dei Dipinti, a unique group of three separate apartment blocks surrounding a private garden. The corner building, the Insula di Giove e Ganimede, contains a spacious, well-decorated tablinum. Its paintings are of particular interest, as they are among the best-preserved in Ostia.

Chapter IV discusses the Ostian domus. Two examples are described--the Domus della Fortuna Annonaria, with sumptuous fourth century ornamentation and the Domus del Pozzo, which was converted from a small, second century apartment block.

Chapter V documents the few extant remains of insulae in Rome. In layout and appearance, they are similar to Ostian buildings. The domus and the different types of insulae are depicted on the Forma Urbis--a marble plan of the city from the time of Septimius Severus. Numerous examples can be found among the surviving fragments. The regionary catalogues, dating from the fourth century, give the number of insulae and domus contained in each of the

fourteen Augustan regions. There are only 1,790 domus to the much larger total of 46,602 insulae. It seems likely that these latter buildings closely resembled in appearance the multiple-storey brick dwellings found in Ostia.

CHAPTER I

ANCIENT SOURCES ON DOMESTIC ROMAN ARCHITECTURE

Modern experts are unable to agree on a satisfactory definition of an insula. Their opinions vary widely, as the following table illustrates:

<u>insula</u>	= <u>taberna</u> used as a dwelling (Dureau de la Malle ¹)
"	= any inhabitable room (Preller ²)
"	= an apartment (Cuq, ³ Castiglioni ⁴)
"	= a floor of a <u>casa</u> (Richter ⁵)
"	= <u>casa</u> for rent (Jordan, ⁶ de Marchi, ⁷ Lanciani, ⁸ Calza ⁹)

¹A. Dureau de la Malle, "Recherches sur l'étendue et la population de la ville de Rome," Mém. de l'Acad. d. Inscr. et B.L., XII, 1836, pp. 237-285.

²L. Preller, Die Regionen d. Stadt Rom, (Jena, 1846), p. 86.

³E. Cuq, "Une statistique de locaux affectés à l'habitation dans la Rome impériale," Mém. de l'Acad. d. Inscr. et B.L., XI, 1915, pp. 279-335.

⁴P. Castiglioni, Monografia della città di Roma, quoted by G. Calza, "La popolazione di Roma antica," Bull. Comm., LXIX, 1941, p. 143.

⁵O. Richter, "Insula," Hermes, XX, 1885, pp. 91-100.

⁶H. Jordan, "Topografia der Stadt Rom," Alterthum, I, 1878, p. 541.

⁷A. de Marchi, "Ricerca sulle Insulae," Mem. del R. Ist. Ant. Lombardo, 1891, p. 252.

⁸R. Lanciani, "Roma antica e Londra moderna," Nuova Antologia, March, 1883.

⁹G. Calza, op.cit., pp. 143-147.

The testimony of ancient sources is much less confusing. Both Tacitus and Suetonius mention insula in opposition to the domus, the private one-family dwelling reserved mainly for the wealthy. Suetonius speaks of the great fire of 64 A.D. :

(Nero, XXXVIII, 2) Praeter immensum
numerus insularum domus priscorum ducum
arserunt. . . .

Again he contrasts the two types in different terminology:

(Nero, XLIV, 2) . . . iussit . . .
inquilinos privatarum aedium et insularum
pensionem annuam repraesentare fisco.

And Tacitus says:

(Ann. XV, 41) Domuum et insularum et
templorum quae amissa sunt, numerum inire
haud promptum fuerit. . . .

(Ann. XV, 43) . . . effectis domibus aut
insulis. . . .

Usage of the word is not always as clear as in the previous passages. Insula was substituted for aedes, domus, habitatio and aedificium. Cicero was the first to use the word in its "modern" sense.

(Pro Caelio, VII, 17) . . . P. Clodi
insulam esse venalem. . . .

But even he, in De Officiis III, 16, 66, used insula for what he had first called aedes.

. . . augures iussissentque Ti. Claudium Centumalum, qui aedes in Caelio monte habebat, demoliri ea, quorum altitudo officeret auspiciis, Claudius proscripsit insulam, [vendidit]; . . .

Seneca employed the word frequently, but strangely Juvenal never used it although he must have been an inquilinus for the greater part of his life. Insula is a much-used term in the Digests:

(Dig. XIX, 2, 30) Dominus insulae, quia aedificia vitium facere diceret, demolierat eam; . . .

(Dig. XIX, 2, 33) Quemadmodum, inquit, se insulam aedificandum locasses, et solum corruisset, nihilominus teneberis; . . .

(Dig. XIX, 2, 58) Insulam uno pretio totam locasti, et eam vendidisti ita, ut emtori mercedes inquilinorum accederent; . . .

(Dig. XXIV, I, 31, 2) . . . si vir uxori aream donaverit et uxor in ea insulam aedificaverit, . . .

Another passage (Dig. XVII, 2, 52, 10) cites a precedent concerning repairs to a property: that co-proprietors must make repairs together, or if only one of them makes the repairs, he must ask the other for reimbursement.

The word insula appears also in inscriptions:

(C.I.L. VI, 67) Bonae deae restitutae simulacrum in tutelam insulae Bolani posuit, item aedem dedit Cladus libens merito.

(C.I.L. VI, 8511) Aurelius Hermias . . .
maceria cinctum cum superficie insulae
comparavit sibi posterisque suis itemque
libertis libertabus.

(C.I.L. VI, 10248) . . . dedit libertis
libertabusque suis usum fructum insulae
[. . .] alatianae partis quartae et
quartae et vicensimae, ita ut ex reditu
eius insulae quodannis die natalis sui et
rosationis . . . memoriam sui sacrificis
quater in annum factis celebrent. . . .

In 334 A.D., a corporation thanked its patron for having
restored and decorated an insula:

(C.I.L. VI, 1682) Honori Ammio Manio
Caesonio Nicomacho Anicio Paulino . . .
corariorum insulas ad pristinum statum
. . . restaurari adque adornari
pervigilantia sua providit, in mira
memoria adque in omnia iustitia sua
corpus coriariorum patrono digno
statuerunt.

The word cenaculum was used to define an upstairs
dining room.¹ The Romans seem to have employed it also as
a term for an apartment. In some contexts, the word
clearly appears to include more than a single room.

Festus defines it: (54M) Cenacula dicuntur ad quae
scalis ascenditur.² Cicero contrasts Rome cenaculis
suspensa atque sublata with Capua in loco exsplicata.³

¹Thesaurus Linguae Latinae, (Leipzig: Teubner, 1907), s.v.

²Sexti Pompei Festi, De Verborum Significatu quae Supersunt cum Pauli Epitome, ed. by W.M. Lindsay, (Leipzig: Teubner, 1913).

³Cicero, De Lege Agraria II, 35.

Plautus makes Jupiter say: (Amph. III, 13) in superiore qui habito cenaculo. Jupiter speaks of actually living in the cenaculum -- not merely dining in it. The Digests mention the habitatores of a cenaculum:

(Dig. XIX, 2, 27) Habitatores non, si paulo minus commode aliqua parte cenaculi uterentur, statim deductionem ex mercede facere oportet; ea enim conditione habitatorem esse, ut, si quid transversarium incidisset, quamobrem dominum aliquid demoliri oporteret, aliquam partem parvulam incommodi sustineret, non ita tamen, ut eam partem cenaculi dominus aperuisset, in quam magnam partem usus habitator haberet.

(Dig. XXXIX, 2, 43, 1) Posteaquam paries sublatus esset, habitatores ex vicinis cenaculis emigrassent, . . .

Exorbitant rents made sub-letting common, so that many people lived in the same cenaculum:

(Dig. IX, 3, 5, 1) Nam et si quis cenaculariam exercens ipse maximam partem cenaculi habeat, solus tenebitur. . . . Sed si quis cenaculariam exercens modicum sibi hospitium retinuerit, residuum locaverit pluribus, omnes tenebuntur, quasi in hoc cenaculo habitantes, unde deiectum effusumve est.

(Dig. IX, 3, 5) Si vero plures diviso inter se cenaculo habitent, . . .

(Dig. IX, 3, 1, 10) Si plures in eodem cenaculo habitent, . . .

The Roman authors do not speak of sharing lodgings with strangers. It seems unlikely that many tenants would be crowded together in one room.

An insula could be distinguished from a domus by the presence of at least several cenacula.

(Dig. XIX, 2, 30) Qui insulam triginta
conduxerat singula cenacula ita locavit
ut quadraginta ex omnibus colligerentur; . . .

(C.I.L. VI, 29791) . . . in his praedis
insula Sertoriana bolo esse Aureliae
Cyriaceti filie meae cinacula numero
VI, tabernas numero XI. . . .

The Digests explain that one may turn a domus into a profit-making venture by dividing it into apartments (per cenacula dividere domum¹). In the third century, Tertulian accused the heretical valentinians of having transformed the universe into a large house for rent:

(Adv. Valentin. 7) Etiam creatori
nostri Enniana cenacula in aedicularum
disposita sunt forma. Aliis atque
aliis pergulis superstructis et unicuique
Deo per totidem scalas distributis quot
haereses fuerint, meritorium factus est
mundus.

What do the Roman writers tell us about the conditions of apartment living in Rome? Not a great deal. The details of everyday life seem to have been thought too commonplace to record. However they were fond of deploring the dreadful inadequacies of the housing system. Their unfavourable descriptions contain some details.

Livy is the first author to mention buildings of any

¹Dig. VII, 1. 13, 8.

height in Rome. He cites a surprising portent which occurred in 218 B.C., of an ox having climbed up to the third storey of a house:

(Livy, XXI, 62, 3) . . . in foro
boario bovem in tertiam contignationem
sua sponte escendisse. . . .

Vitruvius explains that overcrowding has necessitated the construction of high buildings:

(Vitruv. II, 8, 17) Itaque pilis
lapideis structuris testaceis, parietibus
caementiciis altitudines extructae
contignationibus crebris coaxatae
cenaculorum ad summas utilitates perficiunt
despectationes. Ergo moenibus
e contignationibus variis alto spatio
multiplicatis. . . .

Martial and Juvenal speak of third-floor apartments:

(Mart. I, 117, 7) . . . scalis habito
tribus sed altis.

(Juv. III, 199) . . . tabulata tibi iam
tertia fumant. . . .

Other references to height include:

(Suet. de illustr. grammat. 9) Namque iam
persenex pauperem se et habitare sub
tegulis quodam scripto fatetur.¹

(Pliny, NH, III, 67) . . . quod si quis
altitudinem tectorum addat . . . fateatur
nullius urbis magnitudinem in toto orbe
potuisse ei (Romae) comparari.

¹Cf. Juv. III, 201 f.

(Seneca Rhetor, Contr. 2, 9) . . . tanta
altitudo aedificiorum est ut neque adversum
ignem praesidium neque ex ruinis ullum
ullam in partem effugium est.

Exorbitant rents were often extorted in the crowded capital. Cicero defends Caelius against a charge of extravagance--that he was paying thirty thousand sesterces for a small apartment:

(Pro Caelio, VII, 17) Sumptus unius
generis obiectus est, habitationis;
triginta milibus dixistis habitare.
Nunc demum intellego P. Clodi insulam
esse venalem, cuius hic in aediculis
habitat decem, ut opinor, milibus.

Juvenal, living in more modest circumstances, makes the same complaint:

(Juv. III, 223-225)
si potes auelli circensibus, optima Sorae
aut Fabrateriae domus aut Frusinone paratur
quanti nunc tenebras unum conducis in annum.

Noise was another source of irritation. Then as now, the narrow streets reverberated with the bustle of business and the uproar of the passing throng. Even at night there was no peace, for then wheeled traffic was allowed to thunder over the cobblestones of Rome. Martial paints a lively picture of the street scene:

(Mart. XII, 57, 3-17 and 26-27)
nec cogitandi, Sparse, nec quiescendi
in urbe locus est pauperi. negant vitam
ludi magistri mane, nocte pistorum,
aerariorum marculi die toto;
hic otiosus sordidam quatit mensam
Neroniana nummularius massa,

illinc palucis malleator Hispanae
tritum nitenti fuste verberat saxum;
nec turba cessat entheata Bellonae,
nec fasciato naufragus loquax trunco,
a matre doctus nec rogare Iudaeus,
nec sulphuratae lippus institor mercis.
numerare pigri damna quis potest somni?
dicet quot aera verberent manus urbis,
cum secta Colcho luna vapulat rhombo . . .
nos transeuntis risus excitat turbae,
et ad cubile est Roma. . . .

Juvenal asks bitterly:

(Juv. III, 234-238)
. . . nam quae meritoria somnum
admittunt? magnis opibus dormitur in urbe.
inde caput morbi. raedarum transitus arto
vicorum in flexu et stantis conuicia mandrae
eripient somnum Druso uitulisque marinis.

Fires, floods and collapses were very real dangers for insulae-dwellers. Roman literature records numerous instances of such calamities.¹ Strabo tells of a certain politician Athenaeus who returned home, having been acquitted of plotting against Augustus, only to be killed by the collapse of his house in the night.² Tacitus mentions the flooding of the Tiber as if it were not a rare occurrence:

(Tacitus, Hist. I, 86) . . . non modo
iacentia et plana urbis loca, sed segura
eius modi casum implevit: rapti e
publico plerique, plures in tabernis et

¹See also accounts of the fire of 64 A.D. in Suetonius, Nero, XXXVIII, 1-2, and in Tacitus, Annales, XV, 38.

²Strabo, 4, 5, 4.

cubilibus intercepti. . . . Corrupta
stagnantibus aquis insularum fundamenta,
dein remeante flumine dilapsa.

Dio Cassius gives a similar account of an earlier flood.¹

Pliny speaks of ruinae sponte praecipites aut inpactae
incendiis.² Seneca mentions parietes insularum exesos,
rimosos, inequales³ and in another work, has machinationes
tectorum supra tecta surgentium.⁴ He speaks of the same
matters in de Beneficiis:

(VI, 15, 7) Quantum nobis praestat, qui
labentem domum suscipit et agentem ex imo
rimas insulam incredibili arte suspendit.

Cicero, as a landlord, was troubled by the imminent col-
lapse of several of his buildings:

(Cic., Ad Atticum, XIV, 9) . . . tabernae
mihi duae corruerunt reliquaeque rimas
agunt, itaque non solum inquilini sed
mures etiam migraverunt.

Juvenal describes the plight of the common man, who became
the victim in all such calamities:

(Juv. III, 190-202)
quis timet aut timuit gelida Praeneste ruinam
aut positis nemorosa inter iuga Volsiniis aut
simplicibus Gabiis aut proni Tiburis arce?
nos urbem colimus tenui tibicine fultam

¹Dio Cassius, XXXIX, 61.

²Pliny, NH, XXVI, 106.

³Seneca, de Ira, III, 35, 5.

⁴Seneca, Epist. XC, 7.

magna parte sui; nam sic labentibus obstat
vilicus et, veteris rimae cum texit hiatum,
securus pendente iubet dormire ruina.
vivendum est illic ubi nulla incendia, nulli
nocte metus. iam poscit aquam, iam frivola
transfert
Vcalegon, tabulata tibi iam tertia fumant:
tu nescis; nam si gradibus trepidatur ab imis
ultimus ardebit quem tegula sola tuetur
a pluuiis, molles ubi reddunt ova columbae.

The Emperors made several attempts to impose controls on the building trade. Augustus limited the height of any structure on the public streets to seventy Roman feet.¹ Trajan further reduced the maximum to sixty feet.² Nero, after the disastrous fire of 64 A.D., attempted to rebuild the capital according to a coherent plan.

(Tacitus, Ann. XV, 43) Ceterum urbis quae domui supererant non, ut post Gallica incendia, nulla distinctione nec passim erecta, sed dimensis vicorum ordinibus et latis viarum spatiis cohibitaque aedificiorum altitudine ac patefactis areis additisque porticibus quae frontem insularum protegerent . . . destinabat ut . . . aedificiaque ipsa certa sui parte sine trabibus saxo Gabino Albanove solidarentur, quod is lapis ignibus impervius est; . . . nec communione parietum, sed propriis quaeque muris ambirentur.

Tacitus mentions only the districts near the palace which were rebuilt according to these regulations. How closely the rest of Rome conformed is not known. One suspects that tenements were put up in the same shoddy fashion as before. Grasping landlords had little concern

¹Strabo 5, 3, 7.

²Victor, Epitome de Caesaris, 13.

for the safety or comfort of their tenants. Both Martial and Juvenal lived in rebuilt Rome (i.e. after 64 A.D.) and they complained of the same abuses as earlier authors.

On the other hand, the buildings in Ostia, erected during or after the second century, seem to have followed closely the canons laid down by Nero and the other Emperors. The streets are wide and regular, having been laid out on a grid pattern. The buildings seem to have been of moderate height and were of solid brick construction. Ostian citizenry consisted mainly of middle-class bourgeoisie--merchants, craftsmen, shopkeepers, shipbuilders. Consequently, this provincial city exhibited neither the opulent richness nor the squalid poverty of Rome. But the close proximity of the two cities probably insured at least similar building styles. There is a dearth of evidence from Rome which was constantly occupied through the centuries. Ostia, however, became a ghost town in the fourth century and her buildings were left to the natural process of decay. But the Romans built well. Today, the remains of a whole town are at the disposal of archaeologists, attempting to reconstruct an accurate picture of city life during the Empire.

CHAPTER II

CHARACTERISTICS OF OSTIAN INSULAE

In the multi-storey dwellings of Ostia, the builder's main concerns were space and light. The construction of two or more stories, with regular room plans on each floor, ensured an economical use of space. In contrast to the domus, which is illuminated only by an interior courtyard, the insula draws its light from the street and often from an inner courtyard as well. The largest and best-decorated (hence, most important) room in an apartment is built adjacent to an exterior wall, in order to obtain the maximum amount of light. And yet, echoes of the domus arrangement remain. There are ground-floor apartments with unnecessarily large corridors bordering an outer wall. These corridors have been likened to vestigial atria.¹ They draw their light from the large windows in the exterior facade and illuminate the dim interior.

Although the plans of individual insulae vary, certain general characteristics appear. Excepting the smaller blocks, most insulae seem to have had four or five stories. The fact that Augustus and then Trajan was forced to limit the height of buildings in the city,² implies that structures of excessive height were common. Numerous Roman

¹R. Meiggs, Roman Ostia, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1960), p. 247.

²Chapter I above, p. 11.

authors deplored the towering buildings of the capital.¹ Since most Ostian insulae date from the second century A.D. and after, Trajan's ruling would have been in force. The average height of one storey is 3.50 metres,² which allows four stories of normal height and a lower fifth.

Archaeological evidence supports these findings. In numerous cases,³ the second storey of a house and even the beginning of a third, are preserved. After years of neglect and decay, the inward collapse of the roof and upper walls supported and protected the remainder of the structure. Since the accumulated rubble was sufficient to fill a three-storey apartment block, there must have been one, if not two, additional stories.⁴ The walls have an average thickness of fifty-nine centimetres⁵ which, Meiggs affirms, is sturdy enough to support five stories.⁶ There are no signs of major reconstruction dictated by structural weaknesses.

The wide streets of Ostia can be attributed not only to the exigencies of traffic, but also to the accommodation

¹Ibid., p. 6 ff.

²Meiggs, Roman Ostia, p. 240.

³e.g. Casa di Diana, Casa del Serapide, Casa degli Aurighi.

⁴G. Calza, "Le origini latine dell'abitazione moderna," Architettura e Arti Decorativi, III, 1923-1924, p. 7. (Hereinafter referred to as "Origini.")

⁵1.5 Roman feet according to Vitruvius (II, 8, 17).

⁶Meiggs, Roman Ostia, p. 241.

of tall structures. Meiggs puts forth an indirect argument concerning the height of the Capitolium¹ which measures approximately twenty-one metres from ground level to pediment. This important structure must have been taller than the buildings surrounding it, in order to give it prominence. One can infer heights of at least fifteen metres in the neighbourhood. Finally, there is an aesthetic consideration: if the buildings were limited to three stories, they would appear low and squat, especially with second floor balconies, as in the Casa di Diana and the Insula di Giove e Ganimede. Reconstructions by Gismondi and Lawrence of the best-preserved insulae usually comprise five floors, including a low mezzanine over the tabernae.² These buildings are harmoniously proportioned: height balances length in a pleasing ratio.

Staircases accessible from the exterior lead to the upper stories. All are made of masonry, faced with brick or travertine. They are supported by longitudinal barrel vaults, or by vaults underneath the landings. The most common form consists of a single flight of stairs, enclosed by brick walls on both sides. At the top of the steps is a landing which may or may not give entrance to rooms on the mezzanine floor. From here, a second, shorter flight angles off to the second floor. In the larger blocks,

¹Meiggs, Roman Ostia, p. 241.

²Calza, "Origini," p. 3 ff.

there seem to be several staircases,¹ probably one per apartment, thus rendering each unit independent.

The angiportus is a common feature of Ostian houses. Calza uses the term to refer to the covered passageways between apartment blocks, usually containing entrances to interior staircases and/or ground floor apartments. The ceilings are barrel-vaulted and many retain traces of stucco. Most angiportus seem to have been private entrances for tenants only, as they were closed by double doors. They were probably similar to the entrances of the modern Italian pensioni and apartment blocks, with a small side office for the portiere or ostiarius.

The exterior facades of the insulae are simple and severe. They are, without exception, constructed of red or yellow brick. Sometimes both types were used for decorative effect.² String courses emphasized relieving arches or acted as a dividing line between stories.³ Few exteriors retain traces of stucco. Probably most had only the strictly functional brick facade. Entrances were slightly more ornamental, with pilasters or engaged columns supporting triangular gables. All effects were carried out

¹e.g. in Casa di Diana, Casa dei Triclini, and Casa dei Volti Dipinti.

²e.g. the facades of the houses along the Via della Fontana have a single row of yellow brick running the length of the wall directly beneath the windows.

³Again, the insulae along the Via della Fontana.

in brick, which was generally left bare. Only the gables were stuccoed and over-painted in red.

Large windows, occurring even on the ground floor, gave a pleasing symmetry to the facade. Brick relieving arches placed regularly over each window add to the harmonious effect. Fragments of selenite were uncovered in the excavations.¹ This material, used instead of glass for window-panes, must have reduced severely the effectiveness of the lighting. Many windows probably had only simple wooden shutters.

There are numerous traces of second floor balconies. Calza distinguishes three types.² The simplest consists of a wooden structure supported by beams let into the walls. Sockets for the beams can still be observed in the walls of the Casa del Balcone Ligneo. The second type is composed of a continuous row of barrel vaults, supported by large travertine corbels sunk into the walls. Examples include the Casa del Termopolio and the Casa del Balcone a Mensole. The last type projects from the wall in a lunette shape above the first floor windows, as in the Casa di Diana.

There are three principal types of facades in Ostian insulae--those with windows on the ground floor, containing apartments behind; those with porticos sheltering tabernae

¹Calza, "Origini," p. 13 ff.

²Ibid., p. 16.

with apartments overhead; those with rows of shops opening directly onto the street and apartments overhead.

Tabernae were much more prevalent than ground floor apartments, since presumably they brought in higher rents. Consequently, most insulae facades consisted of shop-fronts rather than rows of windows. The shops had wide doorways which could be closed by louvered wooden shutters attached to the top and bottom of each doorway. Grooves are still evident in the travertine thresholds of numerous tabernae. Shops in the Casa del Larario also preserve the channelling in the brick architrave. Sharing the doorway with this arrangement, there was to one side, a smaller door, presumably of solid wood, which swung on dowels. The hole in the step still remains. Probably this door was to allow the proprietor entrance and exit when the shop was closed. It could be held back out of the way during business hours. Inside, a taberna usually consisted of a single room. The rear could be partitioned off, for use as an office, storage room, or even as living quarters. Many tabernae had a mezzanine floor with a low, vaulted ceiling and one small window overlooking the shop front. This served as an apartment for the proprietor and his family, and was reached by stairs located at the back of the shop.¹ The

¹The first three or four steps of these staircases were of brick and many have survived to the present. The remaining steps, constructed of wood, have all disappeared. However a shop belonging to the Casa del Larario (west of the entrance) has preserved on its back wall the outline of the wooden staircase to the mezzanine floor. (see fig. 2.7)

interior was, perhaps, partitioned off to provide greater privacy. Nevertheless it must have been hot, noisy and cramped--a rather unpleasant place to live. There are various arrangements. Some tabernae had entrances to apartments behind, as in the Caseggiato delle Trifore or several tabernae could be interconnected (e.g. Caseggiato del Termopolio). Another variation is the taberna consisting of a single room, which also served as the proprietor's living quarters. This must have been the most unsatisfactory arrangement of all.

Most insulae had clearly divided apartments, not all of which were confined to a single floor. Both the Insula dei Dipinti and the Insula di Bacco Fanciullo had inner staircases leading to additional rooms on the first floor. The rooms of an apartment were not differentiated according to function--the tenant could vary the use of them as he pleased. However there was one room larger and better-lighted than the rest, which seemed to serve as the general "living room". Floors were paved in black and white mosaic, at least in the more important rooms, and the stuccoed walls were painted in various styles. The upper rooms had wooden floors. There still remain holes for the beams in the walls. The ceiling was supported by a brick cornice and/or by travertine corbels projecting from the walls.

Strabo praised the service-pipes and cisterns of Rome.¹

¹Strabo 5, 3, 8.

Ostian buildings seem to have been equipped with comparable amenities. In many *insulae*, there are brick recesses in the walls, extending the whole height of the building. From remains in several buildings, e.g. Caseggiato del Serapide, we can infer that they housed clay service pipes, connected to drains underneath the structure. Latrines were probably provided on upper floors, but there was not enough pressure to pipe water upwards. Residents had to draw their water from nearby cisterns or fountains. Some insulae, such as the Casa di Diana and the Case Giardino, had their own water supply in a private courtyard.

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Ostian insulae can be grouped under three main types, according to an increasing degree of complexity. The simplest, most basic form is a building with a single facade, such as the block between the Via della Fontana and the Via delle Corporazioni (fig. 2.1). It consists of two narrow buildings set back to back and divided into three groups by passageways connecting the two streets. The ground floor of the southern group contains an apartment on the side of the Via delle Corporazioni and shops on the corresponding frontage of the Via della Fontana. The distribution is reversed for the center group, and the final group is reserved for industrial premises. In all three, independent staircases lead to the upper stories.

The southern block contains the Insula dell'Ercole Bambino, fronting the Via delle Corporazioni. The original entrance was through a side opening in the angiportus. There is a later, crude entrance from the Via delle Corporazioni at the south end of the building (A). The wall beneath an original window was knocked out, to form a doorway. This leads into a large room (1) connected to the shop behind. There are traces of red and yellow painted stucco on the walls, and of a staircase in the northeast corner. Room 1 opens into a large hall (ca. 2.00 metres wide) which lights the two adjacent rooms (2 and 3). There are a few traces of a mosaic floor in the hall. Room 3 has two layers of paintings. The first, consisting of red and yellow stucco, dates from the time of Antoninus Pius.¹ The second layer, decorated with leafy vines and roses in red against a white background, is from the third century A.D.² Along the east wall, the holes for the ceiling beams are well preserved and the brick cornice still bears traces of painted stucco. The north wall of room 3 was added later, as were several partitions between the rooms and the hallway. The workmanship is of poor quality. There is a space of ca. 2.50 centimetres at the southwest corner of room 3, showing that the partition wall forming the entrance must

¹C. Van Essen, "Studio cronologico sulle pitture parietali di Ostia," BCAR, LXXVI, 1956-1958, p. 177. (Hereinafter referred to as "Studio Cronologico.")

²Ibid.

have been erected in a makeshift fashion against the already-stuccoed south wall. The small room at the north end of the corridor balances the larger, more important room at the opposite end, as in Calza's pattern for this type of insula.¹ Also at the north end of the hallway is the staircase to the upper floor. Underneath the vaulting for the stairs is a small cubby-hole, perhaps for storage, and opposite is the bricked-up entrance to a shop on the Via della Fontana. The apartment entrance opens on the angiportus, which was paved in a herringbone pattern of brick. The travertine doorstep at the west end has a hole for a door. The adjoining shops on the Via della Fontana have remnants of staircases to a mezzanine floor, except for the shop at the north end, which was connected to the apartment behind.

Adjoining this block is the Insula del Soffitto Dipinto (fig. 2.4). The severe facade has a straight string course above the relieving arches of the windows and a row of yellow bricks running underneath the window-sills. The windows are small and high, as in the previous block. The angiportus is at the south end of the building and contains an entrance to the apartment on the Via della Fontana. It has a barrel vaulted ceiling with a large piece of stucco attached. The south wall contains a square recess for service pipes. Adjacent to the angiportus are two stairways,

¹Calza, "Origini," p. 58.

entered from either street, which lead to the upper floors. Both facades are characterized by double archways, with small windows above. The angiportus was closed by double doors at both ends. The stairways also had doors for privacy.

The hallway has a plain floor of black mosaic. There are two small spaces beneath the stairs, whose function has not been determined. The hallway opens into a spacious corridor lit by large windows in the exterior facade. Room 1 was probably divided off by wooden partitions. Nothing remains now, except the obvious delineation in the mosaic floor, and a stone socket for a door. This room was perhaps a bedroom. It is rather small and the floor, composed of two strips of black mosaic with a white band between, seems strictly utilitarian. Probably little of it was meant to be seen. The adjacent room (2) has three brick walls. The fourth, facing the hallway, must have been of wood. There are two holes in the floor, where the entrance must have been, indicating double doors. The floor is paved with white mosaic and the walls are decorated with paintings. This was the main room of the apartment.

At the south end of the corridor is room 3 which has its painted ceiling reconstructed. The beams and the brick cornices have been plastered over to form a smooth surface, curving into the side walls. The walls are painted in the

style of the Hadrianic-Antonine period (ca. 135-140 A.D.).¹
The floor is black and white mosaic in a geometric pattern.

The original apartment contained five rooms. The main entrance was located at the junction of rooms 2 and 4 (B) and opened directly from the street. Its outline is clearly visible in the outer facade. An inner staircase at the south end of the apartment led to additional rooms on the first floor. In its present state, the apartment has been reduced to small proportions by the blocking off of the two end rooms and of the inner staircase. The barrel vaulting of the stairway can be seen in one of the cubby-holes in the hall. Originally, the room at the north end (5), occupying the whole depth of the apartment, was the most important. It was illuminated directly from the street by three large windows. The adjoining room (4) probably had light partition walls, similar to room 2, in order to screen it from the entrance.

The addition of an internal courtyard allows a building of much greater depth. The Casa del Larario (fig. 2.2) is a unique example, in that its ground floor is lined with shops, both inside and out. It strongly resembles some modern building complex sheltering both apartments and stores. The wide entranceway is framed by brick pilasters resting on travertine bases. There are remains of a brick cornice at a height of ca. 2.40 metres. The long entrance

¹Van Essen, "Studio Cronologico," p. 156.

hall leads to a courtyard flanked by shops (fig. 2.6). The center is occupied by a basin lined in marble. The wall opposite the entrance contains the small lararium from which the house takes its name.

The shop entrances have inserts of travertine in their side walls. Presumably, they are for decorative effect as they seem to serve no structural purpose. The grooved doorsteps of each shop are also of travertine, as are the corbels supporting the mezzanine floors. As mentioned previously, the overhead grooves for the doors are still preserved in the brick architraves of the entrances. The outer row of bricks around the door frame protrude ca. 2.50 centimetres from the wall, delineating the entranceway still more clearly. Most shops have the standard arrangement of louvered doors plus a small side door. One shop on the west side of the courtyard has two doorways separated by a supporting brick pillar. Each step had a single groove, therefore both entrances must have been closed by louvered doors.

The majority of shops have stairs to a mezzanine floor. Some of the stairways are very narrow--less than 0.60 metres wide and the mezzanine windows are small. With one exception, the businesses surrounding the inner courtyard are entirely separate from those fronting the street. The large corner shop is connected to its neighbour on the Via del Larario. Probably both formed a single business establishment.

There is a second, no less imposing, entrance from the Via del Larario. It is framed by pilasters and closed by double doors. The architrave still contains stone sockets at each end. There is a small room for the ostiarius on the north side of the hall. Adjacent though not connected, is a single room which has no access to the upstairs. This could have been a small apartment for the porter.

A staircase leads from the courtyard to a first floor landing, containing an entrance to the room immediately above the supposed porter's apartment. There is no other way of access from the ground floor--the upstairs must have been served by a single staircase. Calza's vision of loggias connecting the four sides of the upper stories of a courtyard seems appropriate here.¹

The last type belongs to what Calza terms palazzo di tutti² which is a combination of atrium house plus apartment building, above rows of tabernae. This is the largest type of insula, consisting of four or five stories. Caseggiato del Serapide, dating from the Hadrianic period,³ is a good example (fig. 2.3). Its north side fronts the main road, Via della Foce, while its east side is flanked by a

¹Calza, "Origini," p. 59.

²G. Calza, "Contributi alla storia della edilizia imperiale romana," Palladio, V, 1941, p. 1 ff.

³H. Bloch, "I bolli laterizi nella storia edilizia di Ostia," Scavi di Ostia I, (Rome: Istituto Poligrafico dello Stato, 1953), p. 224.

lane (Via della Calcara). Although more grandiosely proportioned, the building recalls Casa del Larario with a central courtyard and surrounding shops. The main entrance is flanked by two large tabernae on each side. All communicate with the interior of the house, except for the shop in the northwest corner (B). The ground floor rooms had wooden ceilings at a height of 3.30 metres. Brick cornices are still evident along the side walls. The rooms on the east side of the building were interconnected; the rest were not. All had mezzanines accessible from inner staircases. The shops are large, consequently their upstairs apartments must have been reasonably spacious. Taberna A (to the east of the main entrance) contained a two room apartment overhead. Windows overlooked either the street or the courtyard, since all the shops had two facades.

The slightly trapezoidal courtyard, which measures 8.00 by 10.00 metres, is completely surrounded by a portico, consisting of twelve arches (three per side) supported by pilasters of stuccoed brick (fig. 2.5). Above the arches runs a strictly decorative cornice, three bricks wide. The cross vaults of the portico are conserved only between six of the original pilasters. On the ceiling of the vaults are remains of stucco with a red background and faint traces of some figures. The central archway on the south side (C) forms an ornamental gateway to the Terme beyond. Two brick pilasters, bearing a channelled design in stucco,

support a brick pediment, outlined with decorative moulding. The pediment is covered with white stucco and ornamented with festoons of leaves and bucrani. There are two basins in the courtyard. The one in the northeast corner is poorly constructed, and partially blocks one of the arches of the portico. The latter seems to have been a late construction and probably was a trough for animals. The floor of the courtyard and the aisles of the portico were paved in opera spicata. Under the pavement were traces of a more antique private construction dating from the Augustan age.¹

There were two sets of stairs to the upper floor. The best preserved staircase is 2.00 metres wide and is constructed of brick. It is located at the southeast end of the courtyard (D) diametrically opposite the second set of stairs, only two steps of which are preserved (E). Beside staircase D is a secondary entrance from the Via della Calcara and underneath the ramp is a small room for the ostiarus. This flight of stairs leads to a first-floor landing, which gives entrance to an apartment above a shop. The second floor is 7.00 metres up from ground level. The upstairs apartments consisted of a series of rooms lined up along the front of the house, with a large corridor in front of them, corresponding to the portico underneath. The only remains at present are four rooms of an apartment and the adjoining corridor at the south end of the building.

¹G. Calza, Scavi di Ostia, I, p. 126.

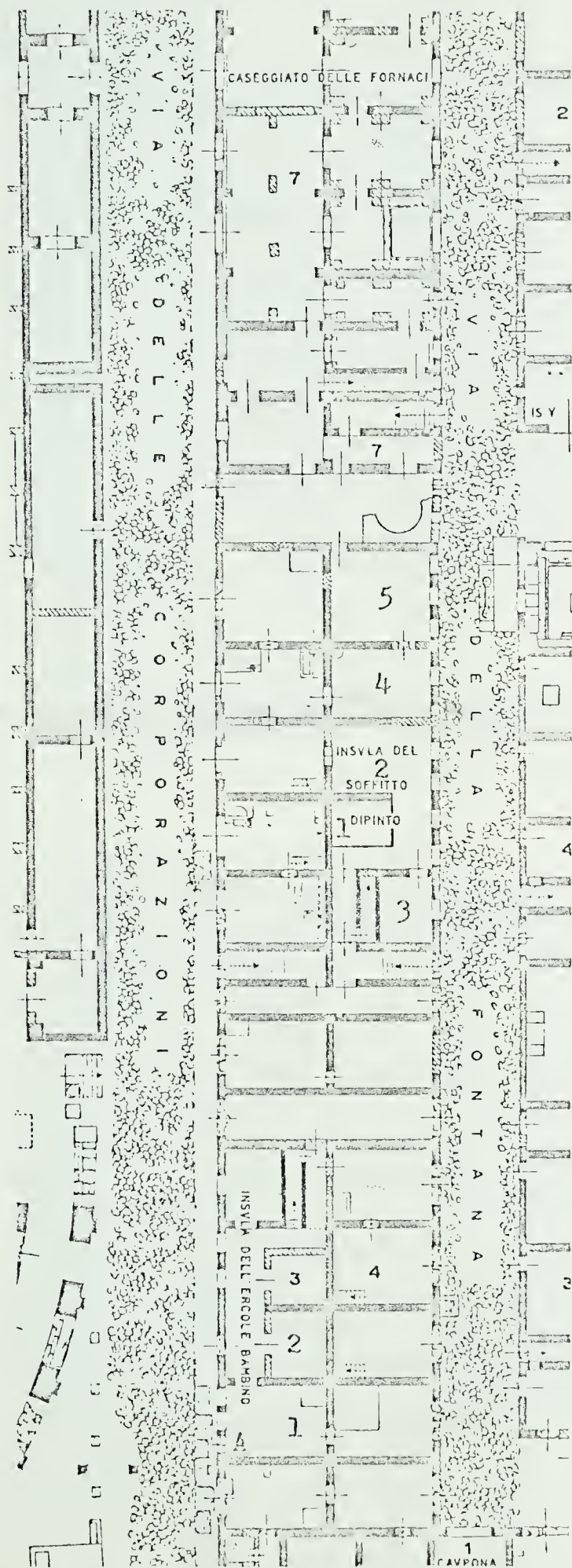


Fig. 2.1. Insula dell' Ercole Bambino, Insula del Soffitto Dipinto and Caseggiato delle Fornaci.

EDIFICIO
TERMALE

VIA DELLA CALCIARA

VIA DELLA FOCE

26.50

25.60

A

B

C

D

E

CORTILE

8.00

10.00

2.50

Fig. 2.3.
Caseggiato del
Serapide.



Fig. 2.4. Facade of the Insula del Soffitto Dipinto on Via della Fontana.



Fig. 2.5. Courtyard of the Caseggiato del Serapide.



Fig. 2.6. Courtyard of Casa del Larario.



Fig. 2.7. Casa del Larario--back wall of a shop showing the outline of a wooden staircase to the mezzanine.

CHAPTER III

CASE DELLA VIA DEI DIPINTI

Three buildings bordering the Via dei Dipinti form an L-shaped complex, whose two inner sides enclose a pleasant garden. This group of apartments cannot be classified strictly under the three aforementioned types.¹ The buildings have at least two external facades, which affects the internal arrangement. Rooms are grouped along both facades, but there is no connecting corridor: one room leads into another. A spacious vestibule in each house recalls the domus arrangement. The southernmost building contains a small courtyard, despite the fact that it overlooks the inner garden. The uniqueness of these apartments warrants the attention of a whole chapter.

The complex has a total area of 900.00 square metres.² The average height of the ground floor rooms is ca. 7.50 metres.³ Insula di Giove e Ganimede consists of a row of tabernae along the Via di Diana, entirely separate from the

¹Becatti (Ostia, (Rome: Istituto Poligrafico dello Stato, 1965), p. 19) and Boëthius (Golden House of Nero, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1960), pp. 158-161) classify the Case della Via dei Dipinti as a separate, fourth type. However, since this is the only arrangement of its kind in Ostia, I prefer to regard it as a variation on type three.

²G. Calza, "La preeminenza dell'insula nella edilizia romana," MA, XXIV, 1914, p. 602. (Hereinafter referred to as "La Preeminenza")

³Ibid.

large, private apartment behind. Casa dei Dipinti and Insula di Bacco Fanciullo consist of apartments only. Each has eleven rooms--seven on the ground floor and four on the floor above. The most important rooms are those furthest from the entrances (i.e. 4 and 6, 11 and 13). They are easily distinguished, both on account of their height and on account of the greater number of windows. The whole complex contains three staircases communicating with the upper floors.

The southernmost building, the Insula di Giove e Ganimede (fig. 3.1) borders Via dei Dipinti and Via di Diana. It is the largest, best preserved and also il più signorile of the three. Entrances from both streets open into vestibules--a feature reminiscent of the traditional Latin house. The main entrance on the Via dei Dipinti has three limestone steps leading up to the threshold. The vestibule within is wide (3.80 metres) but has a low ceiling (3.30 metres). This in turn opens into an]-shaped corridor, running the length of the apartment. The second, smaller vestibule leading from the Via di Diana also opens on this corridor.

The two rooms on the south side of the main entrance (17a and b) must have been connected with the running of the house. Small and poorly-lit, both have plain floors of herring-bone brick. The inner room (17b) has no light source, except for its two doors, opening onto the corridor

and onto room 17a. Calza states that it is a latrine.¹ It is difficult to think of any other function for this small, dark room--except perhaps that of a storeroom. The second room (17a), adjacent to the entrance, obtains its light from a small window opening on the street. It is, perhaps, a kitchen, or more likely, a room for the ostiarius.²

These mean, utilitarian rooms meant for the family slaves contrast sharply with the two rooms (15 and 16) on the north side of the vestibule. Both are spacious and well-lit, with floors of geometric mosaic in a good state of preservation. Each of the rooms has a large side window in order to obtain the maximum amount of light from the courtyard. Room 16, adjacent to the courtyard, has a window 2.30 metres square, while the window in the dividing wall between rooms 15 and 16 measures 2.10 by 2.30 metres. In respect to their form, position and means of illumination, these two rooms are duplicated at the extreme north end of the two adjoining buildings (i.e. Rooms 10 and 11, 3 and 4).

The small inner courtyard (A), adjacent to room 1, measures 8.30 by 5.10 metres. It is paved in white mosaic, surrounded by a wide black band. The four large windows of the tablinum overlook the area, as do various second floor

¹G. Calza, "Gli scavi recenti nell'abitato di Ostia," MA, XXVI, 1920, p. 357. (Hereinafter referred to as "Gli Scavi Recenti".)

²Ibid.

windows. The most important function of this courtyard must have been to provide light for the upper stories. A gate at the north end leads to the private garden.

Across the courtyard, opposite room 16, is the spacious and impressive tablinum. It measures 9.00 by 7.65 metres and is approximately 7.00 metres high. Its west wall contains a large arched opening (3.50 metres wide) which originally must have been a doorway, but now is blocked by a low partition ca. 0.70 metres high.¹ Above the opening, at second floor level, are located three windows. The room has no other source of illumination. It seems strange that the builder did not include any windows overlooking the garden. Perhaps he wished to preserve the privacy of this garden for all the tenants.

The floor, in contrast to the richness of the walls, is paved in a simple geometric design. Octagons on a white background alternate with small squares forming a checker-board pattern. The octagons are outlined by eight black rectangles and there is a small black square in the center of each figure. This floor, along with others in the same apartment, was patched even in antiquity. The patching is sloppy and was done with no regard for the design.

The walls of the tablinum extend upwards to a height of 7.00 metres, with no trace of a ceiling. This imposing

¹Ibid., p. 361.

room must have been roofed over by wooden beams. Its grand dimensions and the absence of interior supports necessitated a light-weight ceiling and prevented the addition of apartments above. Probably, the roof sloped downwards towards the garden, or the inner courtyard, or both. Calza values this room as superior to any other in Ostia¹--for the vast amount of area painted, for the multiplicity of its motifs and the newness of the decorative elements introduced. The decoration of the lower part of the walls and most of the right wall has been lost, but the remainder is well-preserved. At the time of discovery there were three distinct layers of mortar on the walls. The original layer consisted of a standard grade mortar, rather thickly applied.² The second layer is thinner and of a better quality.³ A small amount of marble dust was added to the mixture. The third layer, which has disappeared entirely, consisted of a thin stucco wash.⁴ This last technique was cheap and shoddy. Instead of stripping the wall or picking it over to provide an adhesive surface, the decorator merely applied a new coat of plaster over the old. Since this layer was not securely bonded to the wall, it tended to flake away. The excavators found few traces of this

¹Ibid., p. 384.

²Ibid., p. 389.

³Ibid.

⁴Meiggs, Roman Ostia, p. 444.

third layer.¹ Now it has disappeared entirely, revealing the older paintings beneath.

The two long walls were divided into the same number of squares with identical figures, except the two central panels, each of which contained one figure only and different mythological scenes. The back wall has the same type of decoration, although the number and order of the squares vary. The two side sections of this wall are repeated on the wall facing it, along the edges of the windows. The room is also divided into three horizontal sections. The lowest consists of a kind of socle (0.70 metres high) painted in imitation veined marble. Only a few traces remain. The middle section (2.30 metres high) employs two different motifs: squares of a solid colour and squares containing animal and human figures. Less than one-third is left of the third section, which is divided from the lower by a broad black band overpainted with various architectonic elements in yellow-gold. Almost nothing is preserved above this band. Calza suggests that there were large polichrome areas without figures, constituting a high coloured border above the restless, varied decoration of the middle section.²

One of the most prominent features of the paintings in

¹Calza, "Gli Scavi Recenti," p. 389.

²Ibid.

this and other Ostian rooms is the seeming incoherence of design. The coloured squares are a variety of sizes. Figures change not only in size, but also in style, arrangement and framing. As well, there seem to be deliberate attempts to create assymmetrical effects. In the tablinum of the Casa di Giove e Ganimede the painted figures ignore their frames. An old man is placed in the upper part of a square, with half his head sticking out above the cornice. A dancer painted in the center of a square has her feet resting on a fillet which frames the square. Perhaps this is an attempt to make the figures more life-like, or at least to break the monotony of numerous squares. Other inconsistencies--including arches not truly centered, slightly oblique lines, unequally divided garlands, irregular frames for small scenes--can better be attributed to careless workmanship than to a conscious attempt at aesthetic effect. Most of the paintings preserved in Ostia belong to insulae catering to middle-class tenants. Because of the standardized nature of such buildings, decoration tended toward the mediocre, the common taste and was carelessly executed, probably on account of the limited funds of the client.

Bloch,¹ by means of brick stamps, dates the walls of the room to ca. 130 A.D. to 135 A.D. Wirth's figure of

¹H. Bloch, "I bolli laterizi e la storia edilizia," Bull. Comm., LXV, 1937, p. 93 and Scavi di Ostia I, p. 216.

180 A.D.¹ can be largely discounted, because of his complete reliance on rather unreliable brick measurements. Calza dates the paintings to a later phase, possibly Severan.² In the latest attempt to classify these paintings, Van Essen has attributed them to the Hadrianic era, i.e. roughly contemporary with the walls.³ She dates the pictures by means of stylistic analysis. She cites the use of soft colours, the execution of figures in white paint and the almost complete absence of mythological subjects as characteristic of Hadrianic classicism.

The remaining rooms in the apartment are grouped along the corridor (m. 8.30 by 6.70) which cuts through the center of the building. It must have had a wooden ceiling, since there are pieces of brick cornice remaining along the long arm of the corridor. The short end has two travertine corbels projecting from its walls, rather than a continuance of the brick cornice. The fact that five entrances open on this end of the hallway would make the use of a brick cornice rather awkward. There is hardly enough wall to support one. How much simpler to employ two stout travertine corbels. An opening (m. 1.70 by 0.70) in the hall floor leads to the main drain underneath the house. A pipe

¹F. Wirth, Römische Wandmalerei, 1934, p. 109, cited by Meiggs, Roman Ostia, pp. 437 and 441.

²Calza, "Gli Scavi Recenti," p. 363.

³Van Essen, "Studio Cronologico," p. 155 ff.

from the northwest corner of the building brought wastes to this central pipe, which then conducted them to the main sewer beneath the roadway. The decoration of the hallway is well-preserved. A red band occupies two thirds of the height of the walls. The remaining lower part, separated by a white band, is in yellow. This background is ornamented with slender columns, festoons of leaves, and various small decorative motifs. The paintings can be dated precisely by a grafitto scratched on the wall of the ambulacrum, outside room 16. The inscription reads:

VII K L COMMODVS¹.

The new calendar instituted by Commodus² did not outlast his reign. The grafitto can only have been inscribed between 191 and 192 A.D., presumably by the decorator of the place. At this time, the entrance from the secondary vestibule leading to the Via di Diana was bricked up. Probably this was the reason for redecoration--the plastering carefully concealed any traces of a door.

Room 20, on the east side of the vestibule, has the best-preserved paintings in the house, excepting those of the tablinum. Each wall has a yellow background and is divided vertically into three sections by two white columns. The center sections seem to have contained a number of figures, of which hardly any traces remain. The side

¹Calza, "Gli Scavi Recenti," p. 369.

²Dio Cassius, LXXIII, 15, 3, and Scriptores Historiae Augustae, Commodus Antoninus, XI, 8.

sections contained isolated figures in statuary poses. These include a nude Hercules in dark red and a woman in a violet dress and bright green cloak. In the background are architectonic elements and various ornaments. An effect of simplicity is created since the background is united by means of a single figure and a few, carefully selected details. The wall opposite the entrance has the most complete decoration. Traces on the other walls indicate the same design with a few different motifs.

A small room at the end of the hall (23) may have been a bedroom. It has a plain floor in white mosaic tile. Its paintings have a white background--a style which came into vogue during the age of Commodus.¹ This room was originally merely one end of the corridor for its end walls were added later. Perhaps its alteration to a separate room and subsequent redecoration occurred at the same time as the bricking up of the secondary vestibule, since the paintings seem to be contemporaneous. If this was so, the major alteration of the house may be dated to the age of Commodus.

Adjacent to the room discussed above is a small utilitarian alcove. It is paved in herringbone brick and there are a few traces of stucco. It may have been a latrine or a kitchen. Two vents are located high up on the wall separating the shop behind. This wall is not original.

¹Van Essen, "Studio Cronologico," p. 160.

Meiggs,¹ in his plan of the Insula di Giove e Ganimede shows the remains of a staircase, which must have led to a mezzanine floor.

The original owner of the apartment probably ran the shop at the corner, since the secondary entrance from the Via di Diana gave access both to the shop and the apartment. The shop itself is spacious and has wide entrances on both streets--indicating a large concern. Stairs to the right of the secondary entrance lead to the upper floor. There is another staircase at the north end of the house, leading from the Via dei Dipinti.

Little is left of the upper floor, except a few traces on the walls. Calza represents ten upstairs rooms on his plan of 1914.² There are traces of barrel-vaulted mezzanines in rooms 16 and 17. Room 17b also had a small window at second floor level facing the hallway. It was blocked up at a later date. There are large second floor windows overlooking the courtyard.

Various grafitti are scattered throughout the house. Though not of great significance, they give clues about the function of the apartment. In room 16, there are innumerable signs of no significance--they are perhaps the wanton destructiveness of an undesirable tenant, as the wall was

¹Meiggs, Roman Ostia, fig. 14.

²Calza, "La Preminenza," tav. III.

later replastered. On the right wall of the same room is a date:

XIIIXXL IANUARIAS¹

There are several representations of boats, or ships--some with sails. These form the first found allusion to marine surroundings in Ostia.² To the right of the door, a profile figure enveloped in a large cloak, has been scratched, most probably with a pin-point. The small dark room at the end of the hall (17b) has many pictures of ships, of animal and human figures, as well as hunting and circus scenes and numerous obscene words. On the right wall beyond the boats, is a nude male athletic figure surrounded by animals, as well as two small fighting gladiators. One is completely armed and has TAURUS faintly inscribed above him. On the left wall is Ti Ermadion cinaedus. The back wall has two inscriptions, one over the other. The oldest has been traced with a forked instrument, since each letter has two traces:

hic ad Callinicum futui
orem anum amicom mare . . .
nolite in aede. . . .

The later inscription, which has its letters traced only once, begins over the last line of the preceding inscription, rendering both illegible. The remainder reads:

¹XII KAL IANUARIUS? Cf. Calza, "Gli Scavi Recenti," p. 369.

²Calza, "Gli Scavi Recenti," p. 369.

Livius me cunus
lincet Tertulle cunus . . .
Efesius Terisium amat.

The wall opposite the door reads: Agathopus et Primu et Epaphroditus tres convenientes. And to the right of the door is: Cepholus et Musice duo convenientes. Calza concludes that here convenientes is used in the obscene sense of the word and cites several references.¹ To use Calza's words, there are "numerous amorous manifestations designated with an anatomical precision of vocabulary". It is surprising to find such obscenities in a signorile apartment.

What was the true function of the apartment? Originally, it must have been a luxurious abode for a rich, middle-class family, obtaining at least some of its wealth from control of the shops along the exterior of the building. Later, the ground floor was altered and cut off entirely from the shops along the Via di Diana. Calza hypothesizes that it became an hotel for wealthy merchants.² Of course, there must have been provisions made for visiting businessmen in Ostia, but so far, no special places have come to light. However the ground-floor layout does not

¹Calza, ibid., p. 372 cites an inscription from Pompei (C.I.L. IV, suppl. 5358) Secundus cum Primigenia conveniunt; (Apuleius, Met. IV, 27) in voluptatem veneriam convenire; and also in judicial language in Thes. Lat. Ling., sub voce p. 825b.

²Ibid., p. 374.

seem particularly suited to an hotel. Rooms 15 and 16 have no privacy on account of the large windows and the fact that they overlook the courtyard. It is unlikely that these, along with the tablinum, would provide extra "social rooms" for the guests. Proprietors liked to utilize for their own profit as much space as possible.

There is also the problem of the two rooms containing the obscene grafitti. Were these more than servants' quarters? Calza denies that they could be used as a brothel, since they lack the two features characteristic of such places in Pompei i.e. they are not separate from the rest of the house, nor do they have a direct entrance from the street.¹ Calza concludes that these are rooms set apart for illicit sex--most probably with the consent of the proprietor. Room 17b opens conveniently on the main corridor. Yet even if this was an hotel, there is still the problem of servants' quarters. There must have been a number of slaves to maintain such a large building. The rooms near the main entrance--meaner and smaller than all the rest--seem to have been designated by the architect as slave quarters. For the reasons outlined above, I find Calza's hypothesis rather shaky and prefer to think of the building as an insula.

The two remaining structures, the Insula di Bacco

¹Ibid., p. 373.

Fanciullo and the Insula dei Dipinti, are almost identical in layout and dimensions. Both have access to the private garden. Their inner facades are lined with windows.

Between Insula dei Dipinti and Insula di Giove e Ganimede is an angiportus leading to the garden. This is the only outside entrance to the garden. Presumably, it was kept locked, as it is today, to prevent strangers from entering the private retreat.

It seems unnecessary to describe both houses, since they are so much alike. I have chosen the Insula di Bacco Fanciullo which is the better preserved of the two. The exterior facade, in contrast to the inner facade overlooking the garden, contains only four high windows of small proportions. The entranceway is a much reduced version of that in the Insula di Giove e Ganimede. Outside, the entrance is flanked by two brick pilasters. There is no trace of the doorstep, which was probably travertine, or of the wooden door frame. The vestibule has been reduced to a narrow corridor, paved in black and white mosaic consisting of squares and rectangles. There was a second transverse corridor running the length of the building on the west side, serving as a passageway between the farthest room of the apartment (3 and 7). There is an identical corridor in the Casa dei Dipinti, but the entrance to the farthest room (10) was later blocked off.

This apartment is divided into three main areas: a

central section consisting of rooms 2 and 5 and the main corridor: two side sections are formed by rooms 3 and 4 and 6 and 7 respectively. Room 5 serves as the foyer of the apartment. It has two large windows, each measuring m. 1.65 by 1.95, which overlook the garden. A masonry cornice, preserved to a thickness of four bricks, runs around three sides of the foyer at a height of 3.30 metres. The large windows along the outer wall of the room did not permit a cornice; two travertine corbels at each end of the wall were employed instead.

The south section contains two rooms. Room 7 overlooks the street and has two high windows. It is the only room in the house without a mosaic floor and is paved in the more utilitarian opera spicata. It contains a staircase to the upper floor.¹ Calza thinks that it served both as a kitchen and as a latrine,² though there are no traces of either function.

Room 6 is the largest and probably the most important room of the apartment. It has three big windows overlooking the garden and the walls are covered with paintings. It was, probably, the tablinum. The same room in the Casa dei Dipinti seems to have extended to a height of two storeys, as there is no break in the stucco of the walls. It was very well lit by six windows (one set of three above

¹The steps are more completely preserved in Casa dei Dipinti.

²Calza, "Gli Scavi Recenti," p. 344.

another). The tablinum of the Insula di Bacco Fanciullo definitely had a ceiling at first floor level, since the brick cornice remains.¹

There are traces of two sets of paintings on the walls --of a primitive plaster covered by a second layer of lime. Large sections of the earlier layer are now on view. The paintings consist of a yellow background divided into squares by red bands of various dimensions. These squares are decorated by various small objects--masks, heads, garlands, etc. Several squares contain full-scale scenes. On the west wall, the abandoning of Ariadne is preserved²--a nude female figure is stretched out on a rock, with the beach behind her. To one side is a young man wearing a chlamys (perhaps Theseus or Bacchus?). The north wall, which contains two doors to the next room, has the badly preserved figure of a man in a posed attitude. The opposite wall depicts a young man with chlamys flying and arm outstretched, pursuing a young woman in a violet dress. This is perhaps a rape scene, although the woman's attitude seems inconsistent with this view--for at a short distance from him, she has stopped and holds a disc in her outstretched hands.

The newer paintings have been best preserved on the

¹Calza suggests a builder's error --ibid., p. 383.

²Thus identified by Calza--ibid., p. 376.

west wall. There is one almost complete mythological scene. A nude male figure stands full-front with a cloak hanging from his left shoulder and a caduceus in one hand. With the other hand, he holds a young boy. Probably this is Hermes holding the infant Dionysus. Near them, a seated female figure in a yellowish dress holds out her arms. Remains of another much-destroyed figure depict a head and an arm holding a thyrsus. Calza surmises that this is the entrusting of the infant Dionysus to a nymph-nurse in the presence of the divinity of the place.¹ Other squares in the room perhaps relate to the same myth, but very little has been preserved.

The third section of the house consists of two rooms (3 and 4) flanking the central section on the north. Room 4 has two large windows overlooking the garden while room 3 is indirectly lit by means of a window (m. 2.00 by 1.90) in the dividing wall. It has no windows facing the street. The two rooms are connected by a side door, as well as having their separate doorways to other parts of the house.

Very little remains of the first floor rooms. Probably, they repeated the layout of the ground floor.² Two sets of stairs--at the north end of the building and in room 7--led to the upstairs. It is possible that the staircase between Casa dei Dipinti and Insula di Giove e Ganimede served the

¹Ibid., p. 381.

²Cf. Calza, "La Preminenza," tav. III.

two insulae, since none exists between the Casa dei Dipinti and the Insula di Bacco Fanciullo.

These two buildings seem to have housed private apartments. The first room to the right of each entrance could have housed servants' quarters (i.e. rooms 7 and 14). The presence of an inner staircase leading to an upstairs room indicates that the apartment included at least some rooms on the first floor. The outside staircase probably gave access to a separate apartment of the first floor.

It is impossible to determine the height of the three buildings. It can be assumed that they were more than two and less than five stories. If they were in proportion with the two-storied tablinum of the Insula di Giove e Ganimede, they would surely have been either three or four stories high. The fact that only the ground floor is preserved is a measure of the amount of pre-excavation rubble. Surely two collapsed stories would be sufficient to fill up the ground floor apartments.

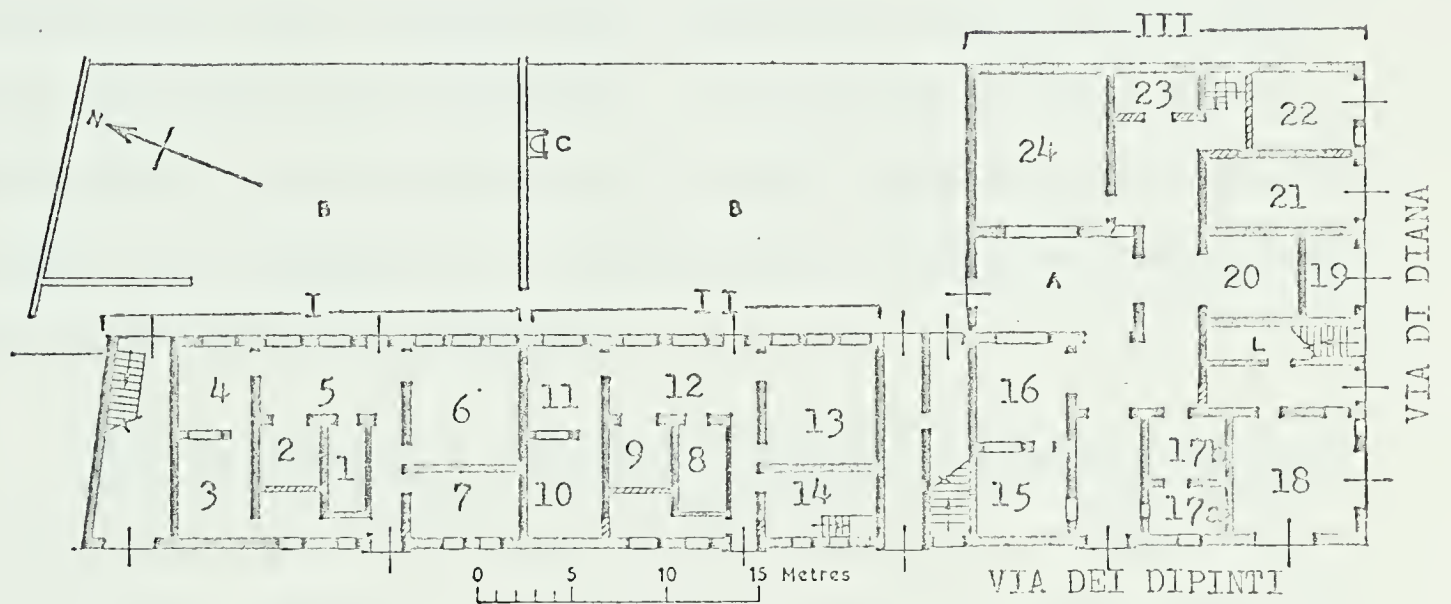


Fig. 3.1. I. Insula di Bacco Fanciullo. II. Casa dei Dipinti. III. Insula di Giove e Ganimede. (A. Open court. B. Garden. C. Small shrine with terra-cotta figure of Jupiter.)

CHAPTER IV

THE DOMUS IN OSTIA

In a study of Roman city architecture, it is impossible to neglect the domus, a type of dwelling inhabited by wealthier families. The domus, which required a large amount of space, was popular during periods of low-density population, i.e. between the Sullan and Augustan periods, and again from the beginning of the third century A.D.¹ During the second century A.D., when space was at a premium, houses with atrium and peristyle were torn down to make way for multi-storied insulae.²

Due to extensive rebuilding during the second century A.D., there are few traces of early houses. Meiggs describes the remains of a Republican peristyle along the Via della Fortuna Annonaria and dates it to early first century B.C.³ Two houses along the southern Cardo, the Domus di Giove Fulminatore and the Domus della Nicchia a Mosaico have Pompeian affinities. Both buildings have similar layouts with a street entrance flanked by shops, and a passage leading to the core of the house, the atrium. Rooms are grouped around the atrium with the main living-room, the tablinum, facing the entrance. The original floor plan

¹Meiggs, Roman Ostia, p. 252.

²e.g. along the eastern side of the western Decumanus and in the area of the Vicolo di Dionisio.

³Meiggs, Roman Ostia, p. 252.

survives, but both houses have been modified and reconstructed. Behind the atrium, each house originally had a peristyle which was usurped by other buildings in more crowded times.

Partial remains of a domus from the Augustan age were uncovered in the southeast corner of the Schola del Traiano. It was akin to the Pompeian house with a peristyle garden surrounded by brick columns. The walls and central niche of the long rectangular nymphaeum in the atrium were decorated with a marine scene. Nearby, along the Decumanus, the foundations of four large domus signorili were unearthed, with atria and peristyles in opus reticulatum, dating from the first century B.C.¹ All were paved in fine coloured mosaics.

Evidence for these early houses is scanty. The fate of those mentioned above is typical--they were either remodelled, or levelled during the second century building boom. When Ostia began to decline in prosperity, her population declined also. There was no longer a great demand for accommodation and property became easier to acquire. Consequently, the domus came back into its own. But styles had changed; the atrium house was replaced by what Meiggs terms, the peristyle house.² The basic plan consisted of an entrance flanked by shops, leading via a

¹R. Calza and E. Nash, Ostia, (Florence: Sansoni, 1959), p. 22.

²Meiggs, Roman Ostia, p. 253.

passageway, to a garden surrounded by a brick portico. Rooms opened off the portico.

The Domus della Fortuna Annonaria (fig. 4.1) is an elegant example of a second century peristyle house.¹ Originally built under Antoninus Pius, it was remodelled in the fourth century to include a more imposing entrance and a large nymphaeum with an apsidal end. Bordering Semita dei Cippi and Via della Fortuna Annonaria, the building has utilized several of the shops along these streets. The whole south side, which includes traces of an earlier wall in opus reticulatum, leans against a neighbouring bath. The house is constructed of bricks except for the apse of room C, which is in opera listata.²

The spacious entrance from the street was obtained by widening the earlier door of a shop and removing the back wall. A pediment probably decorated the outside. Both bases of the supporting columns are still in situ on either side of two travertine steps which descend to the level of the house.

A small vestibule, originally a shop fronting on the Via della Fortuna Annonaria, opens on a spacious internal

¹G. Becatti, Case Ostiensi del Tardo Impero, (Rome, 1949), p. 23. (Hereinafter referred to as Case Ostiensi.)

²Rows of rectangular tufa blocks alternating with rows of bricks, one, two or three deep.

courtyard, which recalls the Greek peristyle. Travertine columns on pedestals of the same material border the courtyard on three sides. The columns on the east and west sides are in line with two short brick walls projecting from the south wall of the courtyard. The west wall has built against it a half column of brick resting on a decorated travertine pedestal. There are no traces of this arrangement against the opposite wall. A large niche in opera listata projects from the center of the south wall. Here was found a statue of Hera or Demeter in a girdled peplum and himation.¹ Its place is taken now by a copy of the statue of Artemis found in three pieces in room C.² Along the whole length of this wall ran a bench in opera listata. Only a few traces of the brick understructure remain today. This must have constituted a pleasant seat from which to enjoy the peristyle garden. In the center was found the remains of a rectangular basin with a drain towards the northeast corner.³ On the east side is a small well in opus reticulatum with a dado of travertine on which rests a round marble-like casing incised with festoons of fruit and bucrani.

The ambulacrum of the peristyle was paved in white

¹Becatti, Case Ostiensi, p. 23.

²R. Calza and M. Floriani Squarciapino, Museo Ostiense, (Rome: Istituto Poligrafico dello Stato, 1962), p. 36, #5(64).

³Becatti, Case Ostiensi, p. 23.

mosaic.¹ In the southwest corner, is yet in situ on a pedestal consisting of a piece of travertine column encased in a square masonry block, the large statue of a woman seated on a throne, dressed in a belted chiton and himation. This is the personification of Fortuna, the patroness of commerce, from which the house takes its name.

On the west side of the courtyard opens the principal room of the house (C). The entrance (fig. 4.3) consists of three brick arches supported by two thin white marble pilasters with volute capitals. Each threshold block is a different type of marble--the center one, of African marble --that on the left, of portasanta, that on the right, of white veined marble. This large three-part opening served to illuminate the room from the peristyle.

The building of a large apse in opera listata was made possible by the removal of the back walls of two shops on the Semita dei Cippi. The pavement as well as the walls, was decorated with polichrome marbles in opus sectile. In the center of the apse wall opens a semicircular niche approximately 1.00 metre high where stands a copy of a statue of Ceres. The original was found in latrine D.² The south side of the room is completely occupied by a nymphaeum with a rectangular basin faced in marble on the outside (fig. 4.3). There is a marble gutter in front. In

¹Ibid., p. 23.

²Ibid., p. 24.

the wall open four niches, alternately rectangular and semicircular, which were all covered with marble and framed by marble columns resting on projecting corbels of the same material. These columns were probably crowned by a pediment or an architrave. The whole front of the nymphaeum was covered with marble. Three slabs at each end are partially preserved. In the basin was found the head of a statue of Aphrodite,¹ probably originally decorating some niche of the nymphaeum.

Vents in the two semicircular niches gave light and air to a backroom latrine (D) with a marble seat, found in a space beneath the stairs. A door on the south side of the apse led to this latrine. Behind the nymphaeum is the casing for the pipe supplying both the latrine and the nymphaeum. In this room were found two male portrait busts, the first dateable ca. 245-250² and the second ca. 250.³ It is not certainly known if they belonged to the decoration of the domus.

On the opposite side of the peristyle opens another large room (F) with a spacious entrance and a marble threshold. The pavement consists of tiles of coloured marble. Along part of the south wall (ca. $\frac{1}{4}$) runs a bench in

¹Calza and Squarciapino, Museo Ostiense, p. 41 ff. #13(123) fig. 25.

²Ibid., p. 70 #9(37).

³Ibid., p. 78 #2(62).

masonry. The north wall contains a doorway leading to the adjacent room (H). A large window overlooking the peristyle illuminates the interior. The floor is decorated in black and white mosaic portraying various mythological scenes, including Theseus and Sinis, Theseus and Procrustes, Actaeon, Ganimede, and the wolf with Romulus and Remus. One large band along the east side has only a geometric design and could be the place for a bed, if the room is a bedroom. This room was heated by a group of clay pipes for hot air, along the north wall. The hypocaust was located beneath the pavement¹ and was supplied by a small back room (G) which is situated at a lower level. From room G, one enters corridor I from the northeast angle of the peristyle. Room L must be a service room accessible from this corridor, which also connects with shop M. Rooms N and O are small adjacent living rooms which preserve traces of an interesting wall decoration. The walls are painted in white, blue and yellow in imitation of polichrome marble work. In the east wall of room N is a small niche painted in the same imitation marble work--evidently a small lararium. Room P is characterized by a masonry bench 90 cm. high and 45 cm. wide, along its east wall. There is a small storeroom in the northwest corner of the peristyle, occupying a corner of the independent taberna on Via della Fortuna Annonaria. The storeroom is connected to the courtyard by a small entranceway.

¹Becatti, Case Ostiensi, p. 25.

Domus del Pozzo (fig. 4.2) was converted from a small second century apartment block to a private house. It was constructed totally of opus reticulatum, with a plain brick facade of the second century A.D.¹ The basic plan did not suffer any major alterations, except for the large room at the extreme north end, whose entrance was widened and columns added, to create the typically sumptuous main room which characterized the late domus.

The street entrance is framed by two half columns of brick, set in shallow recesses in the wall and resting on travertine pedestals (fig. 4.4). The doorway has the same kind of brick frame with travertine inserts already noted in Casa del Larario. The travertine threshold block contains sockets for double doors. The entrance leads into vestibule A, which was paved in black and white mosaic.² A door at the north end gives access to room B which forms almost a single unit with the adjoining room C. The doorway between these two rooms was enlarged, so that the opening was obstructed only by two monolithic columns of giallo antico. One still in situ is ca. 2.00 metres high. Only the pedestal of the other remains. Both columns have bases of white marble which rest on the second of two steps leading up from room B. Parts of both rooms are still paved in opus sectile with polichrome marbles. The skirting

¹Ibid.

²Ibid.

boards of both rooms were marble; the walls were stuccoed and painted in yellow with red bands. At the northeast corner of room C is a large brick base with a marble covering. It probably supported a niche containing the lares or some other revered statue.¹ An adjoining staircase descends to an underground well.

In the same corner are traces of a stairway to an upper floor (fig. 4.5). Beginning at ground level against the south wall, it continues upward along the east wall. The stairs seem to have been of masonry, for there are visible traces of a barrel vault. While the building was still an apartment, room C must have been a shop. This is evident from the outside, where the outline of a large entranceway is clearly visible. The travertine threshold and travertine inserts up the sides are still in place. The shop probably had a low mezzanine floor, since the stairs must have led somewhere. Presumably they were removed, perhaps along with the floor of the mezzanine, when the building was remodelled.

Obviously the building must have been a small block, consisting of a single floor. It cannot be determined how many apartments the structure contained--perhaps only one, probably not more than two. There is a low doorway underneath the stairs which led to the shop behind. It was later bricked up and partially hidden behind the lararium.

¹Cf. Caseggiato del Serapide, Casa dei Dipinti.

Otherwise, the second century house has not undergone alteration. The remaining rooms seem small and cramped and rather utilitarian, compared with the grand reception area. The rooms must have been poorly lighted, since the only source of illumination was the front facade. Altogether they are more reminiscent of a compact apartment than a spacious domus. On the east side of room C open two small rooms (D and E) with a few traces of mosaic floor. From vestibule A, one enters room F which was paved in mosaic and had stuccoed and painted walls, as did room H, to the south. G was a secondary room. A small corridor I gives access to service room L. Its back wall contains a small door leading to latrine M, located in the most hidden corner of the house.

A domus was constructed for the comfort and convenience of its owner. Its decor reflected his taste and his wealth. The grander domus have rooms with walls and floors of polichrome marbles, elaborate nymphaea, marble columns and statues.¹ The owner of Domus della Fortuna Annonaria must have been an enthusiastic collector of statuary. No fewer than thirteen pieces were found in his house.² Domus del Pozzo, on the other hand, contained only a few marble

¹The more sumptuous domus include: Domus di Amor e Psiche, Domus del Ninfeo and Domus delle Colonne.

²See pp. 55-57 above and also Calza and Squarciapino, Museo Ostiense, p. 34, #16(113); p. 40, #8(102); p. 70, #9(37); p. 78, #2(62); p. 46, #1(368); p. 52, #4(127).

busts¹--probably reflecting a less favourable state of finances. Some houses contained gardens in their central courtyards--others had at least a fountain to cool the air. The arrangement of rooms around a central light source provided more uniform, if less intense, illumination than was possible in the insula. Rooms along the outer facade of an apartment block were brightly lighted, but the inner ones must have been rather gloomy.² Apartment dwellers had to endure the noise and heat from the streets, but the owners of a domus were protected from such discomforts by a closed facade along the street and a cooling garden within. Comparisons between an ancient domus and insula bring to mind similar comparisons between the modern apartment block and the architect-designed home. The insula was standardized and uniform. Its decoration reflected popular taste. The domus, which had more money lavished on its construction, was a unique structure, catering to the comfort of its owner. It exhibited rich decoration and often, a refined taste in art.

¹Calza and Squarciapino, Museo Ostiense, p. 51, #1(1130); p. 76, #27(79).

²I am speaking primarily of the insulae with single facades, but even those with courtyards contained some dark rooms. (e.g. Casa di Diana).

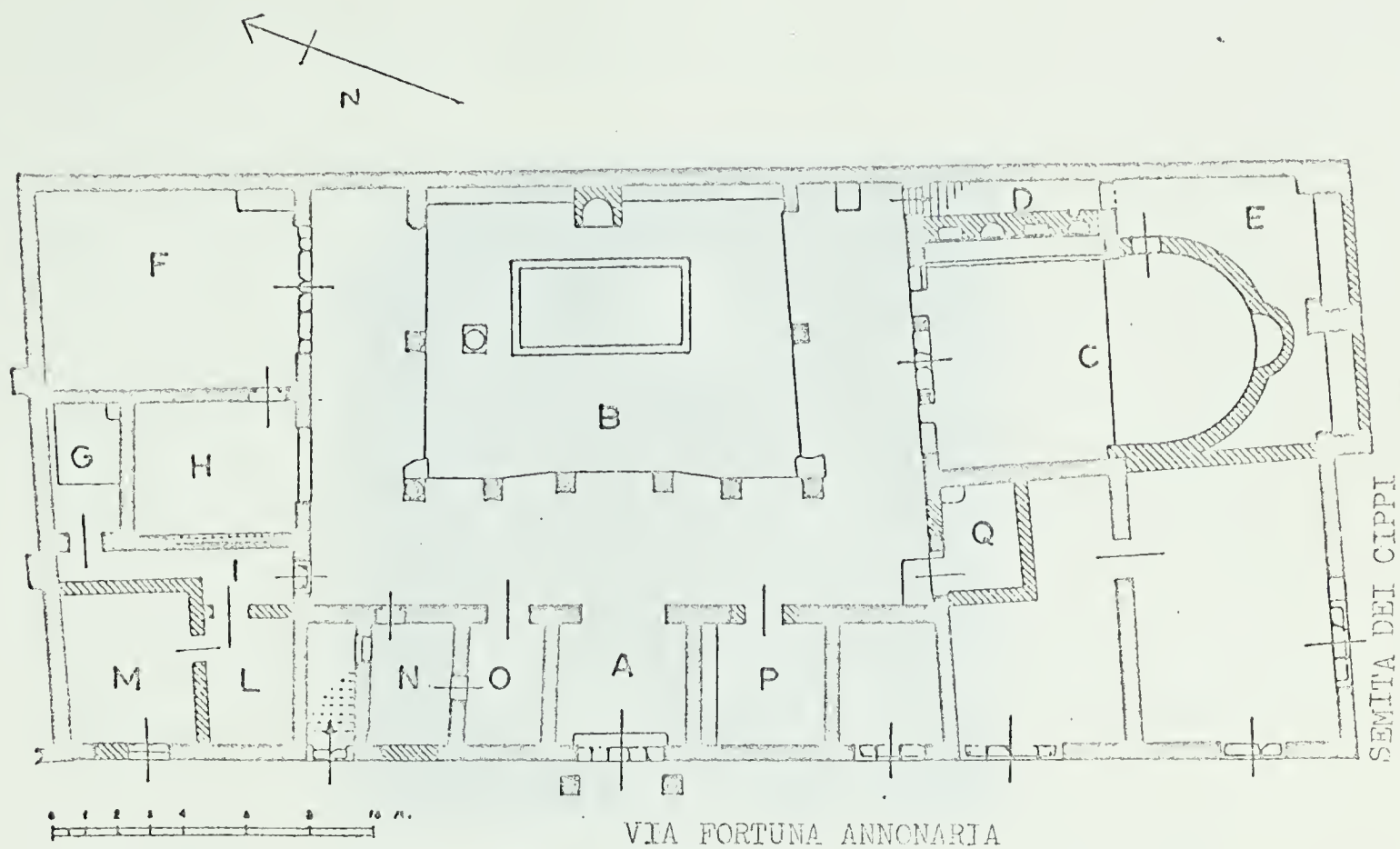


Fig. 4.1. Domus della Fortuna Annonaria.

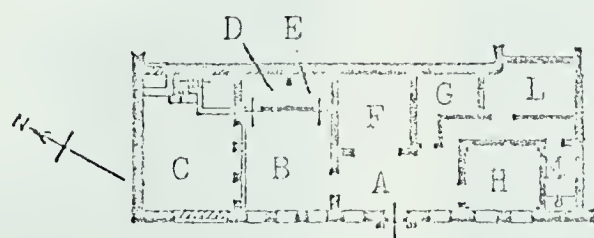


Fig. 4.2. Domus del Pozzo.



Fig. 4.3. Nymphaeum of the Domus della Fortuna Annonaria.



Fig. 4.4. Entrance to the Domus del Pozzo.



Fig. 4.5. The northeast corner of the Domus del Pozzo, showing traces of a staircase to the upper floor.

CHAPTER V

THE RELEVANCE OF OSTIA TO ROME

Rome, unlike Ostia, has remained inhabited throughout the centuries. A slow but continual process of decay and renewal has left very few traces of non-monumental buildings belonging to the Imperial city. Several facades have been uncovered beneath churches. If there were only the scanty Roman evidence to work from, we should have a very limited idea of the everyday life of the times. But as it is, the abundant remains from Ostia coupled with confirming evidence from Rome, provide a fairly satisfactory picture.

The facade of a Roman insula has been incorporated into the Aurelian wall, north of the Porta Tiburtina (fig. 5.1).¹ This facade is almost 16.00 metres high and over 30.00 metres long. Three floors can be distinguished. Little remains of the ground floor but the two upper stories have a number of windows with relieving arches above them. Between ground floor and first floor is a row of travertine corbels which must have supported a balcony.

Another insula facade has been built into one wall of the Chiesa di SS. Giovanni e Paolo (fig. 5.2).² Approximately 2.5 stories are visible. The ground floor consists

¹G. Lugli, I monumenti antichi di Roma e suburbio II: Le grandi opere pubbliche, (Rome: Bardi, 1934), p. 198.

²G. Lugli, I monumenti antichi di Roma e suburbio I: La zona archeologica, (Rome: Bardi, 1930), pp. 229-239.

of six large arched openings, probably shop fronts. Above them is a level row of rectangular windows asymmetrically spaced. The row above, though only partially preserved, is spaced out in an identical arrangement. Inside and below the church is a two-storied construction of twenty rooms--the agglomeration of three different buildings: a Roman palace, a Christian house and an oratory, decorated with second to fourth century frescoes. The tablinum of the house, with traces of Christian frescoes on the walls, has been preserved.

More remains were found under the steps of Santa Maria in Aracoeli, against the west face of the Capitoline.¹ The facade of the second floor, along with parts of the inner walls of the third, fourth and fifth stories are still visible. The whole building must have been about six stories high. The ground floor contained shops with mezzanines above. The small windows can still be seen. There were a number of large rooms on the second floor, each with two or three windows along an outer wall and each with a vaulted ceiling. The third floor is much deeper than the stories beneath and may have faced a courtyard. This floor was divided into a row of apartments, all approached by means of a long, common corridor running across the rear end of the building. Individual corridors for each apartment

¹See G. Lugli, I monumenti antichi di Roma e suburbio, Supplemento, (Rome: Bardi, 1940), I, 11, and P. Harsh, "Origins of the Insulae at Ostia," MAAR, XII, 1935, p. 61.

opened off this main hall. The average suite consisted of three rooms. The fourth and fifth floors probably had similar arrangements.

From 1914 to 1916, several ancient buildings were unearthed at Piazza Colonna during a construction program (fig. 5.3).¹ The largest building discovered (I) lay between the old Via Flaminia and the street parallel to it. The well-made walls were of varying thicknesses (0.60 to 0.75 metres). Some had relieving arches of bipedaes stamped with the year 123.² Brick pilasters with travertine bases and simple moldings lined the facade. There were thirteen along the east wall and not less than ten along the shorter sides. Each was ca. 0.70 metres wide and projected 7.00 centimetres from the wall. Along the east wall, the distance between pilasters varied from 3.55 metres to 5.43 metres. Spacing was more uniform on the shorter sides--ca. 4.10 metres.

Shops lined the exterior with entrances ca. 2.50 metres wide and threshold blocks of travertine. Room B probably originally contained stairs leading to the upper floor. It was later transformed into a latrine. Still in place was a large travertine slab, channelled to facilitate water run-off. A drain ran along the south and west walls

¹E. Gatti, "Scoperte di antichita a Piazza Colonna," Notizie degli Scavi, Fasc. II, 1917, p. 9 ff.

²cf. C.I.L. XV, 957, 1466.

of the room. The floor was paved in coarse black mosaic.

A large staircase with travertine steps was discovered in the northeast corner of the building. The stairs seemed to be a later construction,¹ contemporary with other changes in the building. All the shop entrances along the street were blocked up, indicating a change in function of these rooms--perhaps to private apartments.

The building to the east (II) contained private baths. Another structure was situated across the street from insula I. It had five interconnected rooms along its west side, only one of which opened onto the street (G). The nearby entranceway (H) gave access to the interior of the building and was decorated on the outside by two marble columns, the bases of which remained in situ. The travertine threshold was 2.90 metres wide. Inside was a room equivalent in size to the neighbouring shops. This in turn led to a narrow corridor 2.00 metres long, with a mosaic floor in a simple geometric design. The hall gave access to various interior rooms rebuilt over pre-existing constructions at the end of the fourth century A.D.² Another building to the south was unearthed but remains were few. The side of the building bordering the Via Flaminia was lined with shops. The eastern side (Q) consisted of a

¹Bipedales with second century A.D. marks were found. Cf. C.I.L. XV, 90b and 226.

²Gatti, "Scoperte di antichita a Piazza Colonna," p. 13ff.

portion of the first floor, which was found at 1.50 metres beneath the modern street level.

Similar remains of apartment blocks are to be found near the Tomb of the Scipio family and in Via in Selci. The Roman evidence, though scanty, confirms the testimony of Ostia. Features apparent in the well-preserved Ostian insulae also appear in the fragmentary Roman remains, i.e. the reservation of the ground floor for shops, some of which (as in the Aracoeli house) had mezzanines above them; the arrangement of the upper floors in separate apartments; the provisions for balconies along a facade; the use of the same construction materials i.e. brick and travertine.

The fragments of the Forma Urbis provide more clues as to the appearance of the Imperial city.¹ The plan clearly indicates a number of insulae in Rome. Various features of the buildings are portrayed and the three Ostian types are distinguishable. One easily noticeable difference from Ostia is the irregularity of the building plans. Space was limited and structures were crowded together, in order to provide the maximum amount of living room.

Fragments 109b and c depict an insula with a courtyard and corridors. The building is irregularly shaped and has an arcade with shops along the street front. The private

¹The fragments discussed are found in H. Jordan's edition, Forma Urbis Romae, (Berlin, 1874).

rooms are grouped around a peristyle, one side of which is completely taken up by a single large room.

Fragments 176 and 177a and b have an almost square courtyard approached by a long corridor. Several shops open on the courtyard, recalling Casa del Larario. Two of these are connected to shops along the exterior facade. Most of the businesses have separate back rooms on the ground floor. The adjoining house apparently has a long narrow central courtyard, but part of it is missing from the plan.

There are numerous examples of blocks without courtyards. Fragment 36A depicts a building lined with shops of varying sizes on at least three sides (one end is missing). It has two sets of stairways, the larger of which is situated next to a probable angiportus. Fragment 62 consists of two adjacent houses on the Vicus Bublaris. One building has a very narrow light well, not extending the full length of the house, while the other has four facades on the street and no light well. An angiportus separated the blocks which were, as usual, lined with shops. The same arrangement of one house with a long narrow light well and a second without, occurs in fragment 175. Strip insulae are recognizable in fragment 187.

Fragment 169a recalls the complex on the Via dei Dipinti. An L-shaped building is depicted with shops and a portico

along its exterior facade. The ground which it encloses may have been a walled garden.

Other fragments resemble certain Ostian houses. Fragment 159 has affinities with Casa di Diana. Fragment 238 depicts small, modest structures similar to the Casette tipo group. Lastly, fragment 173 (fig. 5.5) depicts a group of peristyle houses, their rooms opening on colonnaded courtyards. Shops surround their entrances, leading by means of a long entrance hall, to a large room (probably the tablinum).

There are few representations of the domus in the Forma Urbis, which seems to indicate the much higher proportion of insulae in Rome, as in Ostia. Hasty conclusions may be countered by the fact that these are merely fragments, that whole portions of the city are missing. Nevertheless other evidence exists, to be taken into account.

There are two regionary catalogues of the fourteen Augustan regions, which give the total number of insulae and domus in Rome during the fourth century A.D. The two versions are the *Curiosum Urbis Romae regionum XIIII* and the *Notitia Urbis Romae regionum XIIII*. There is some disparity between the figures for individual regions, but the totals are the same in both versions. Zacharias of Mytilene included in his ecclesiastical history a description of Rome taken from the *Notitia*. The figures he states agree with

his source. Carcopino attributed the disparate figures in the *Curiosum* to scribal error.¹ The actual dating of the two catalogues has not been established. Mommsen, whose views have been generally accepted, believed that both came from a common prototype ca. 312 to 316 A.D.² He dated the *Notitia* to ca. 334 A.D. and the *Curiosum* to after 357 A.D.

Much more important than dating considerations are the conclusions to be drawn from these two reasonably authentic works.³ Both agree that fourth century Rome contained 1,790 domus. The regional breakdown is as follows:

Region I . . .	120	Region VIII . .	130
II . . .	127	IX . .	140
III . . .	160 (Not.)	X . .	89
	60 (Cur.)	XI . .	89 (Not.)
IV . . .	88		88 (Cur.)
V . . .	180	XII . .	113
VI . . .	146	XIII . .	130
VII . . .	120	XIV . .	150

The main body of the population must have inhabited the numerous insulae of Rome. The regionaries give the total number of insulae as 46,602. They are divided by regions, as on the following page.

¹J. Carcopino, Daily Life in Ancient Rome, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1960), p. 18 ff.

²Mommsen, Abh. der sachs. Gesellschaft. der Wissenschaft, II, 1868, p. 601 ff. quoted by Lugli, Monumenti antichi, Supplemento, II, p. 9.

³A. Nordh's edition: Libellus de Regionibus Urbis Romae, (Lund: Gleerup, 1949), pp. 74-106.

Region	I	3,250	Region	IX	2,777
	II	3,600		X	2,742 (Cur.)
	III	2,757			2,643 (Not.)
	IV	2,757		XI	2,500 (Cur.)
	V	3,850			2,600 (Not.)
	VI	3,430		XII	2,487
	VII	3,805		XIII	2,487
	VIII	3,480		XIV	4,405

Calza estimated the population of fourth century Rome at 1,215,648 inhabitants and the area of the city at 9,860,600 square metres.¹ The amount of living space for each inhabitant averaged out to 27 square metres. Little wonder that Statius called the city densa Roma (Silv. 4, 14). Ordinary people were forced to live in the valleys or on the slopes of the seven hills. The summits were reserved for the wealthy and powerful. Because there were no means of rapid transport across the city, Rome could not extend herself in a vast urban sprawl, as modern cities do. The working population was forced to remain close to the center of the city. This resulted logically, in the concentration of industry and commerce within the capital, rather than on the outskirts.

Living space was severely limited. Numerous zones were reserved for public buildings, sanctuaries, baths, circuses and parks. Industrial and business premises occupied the ground floors of private buildings. The Romans were forced to build towering apartment blocks with only enough room

¹G. Calza, "La popolazione di Roma antica," Bull. Comm., LXIX, 1941, pp. 142-155.

between them to accommodate the balconies.¹ The Roman rent structure, about which Juvenal complained so vigorously,² only aggravated the situation. The owners of an insula usually rented out the upper stories to a promoter, who then became responsible for finding tenants and keeping the place in reasonable repair. To compensate for the risks involved, the cenacularius often charged exorbitant rents. Tenants, in order to pay their share, were forced to sublet every available room in their cenaculum. The higher floors, containing smaller units, must have been exceptionally overcrowded.

Rome, then, was not so pleasant a place to live as Ostia. Although it lacked the impressive public buildings of the capital, Ostia had wide streets, garden plots and well-planned buildings. Any Roman trapped in the twisting alleyways of the Subura or the Velabrum must have longed for such a place. He was forced to seek pleasure and amusement in the vast public buildings--the circuses, theatres and baths--anywhere but home. For 'home' was to him no more than a dark, cramped space in a tall and shaky edifice.

¹There had to be at least 2.90 metres between buildings on opposite sides of the street, according to Cod. Just. VIII, 10, 12, 5b.

²Juv. III, 223-225.

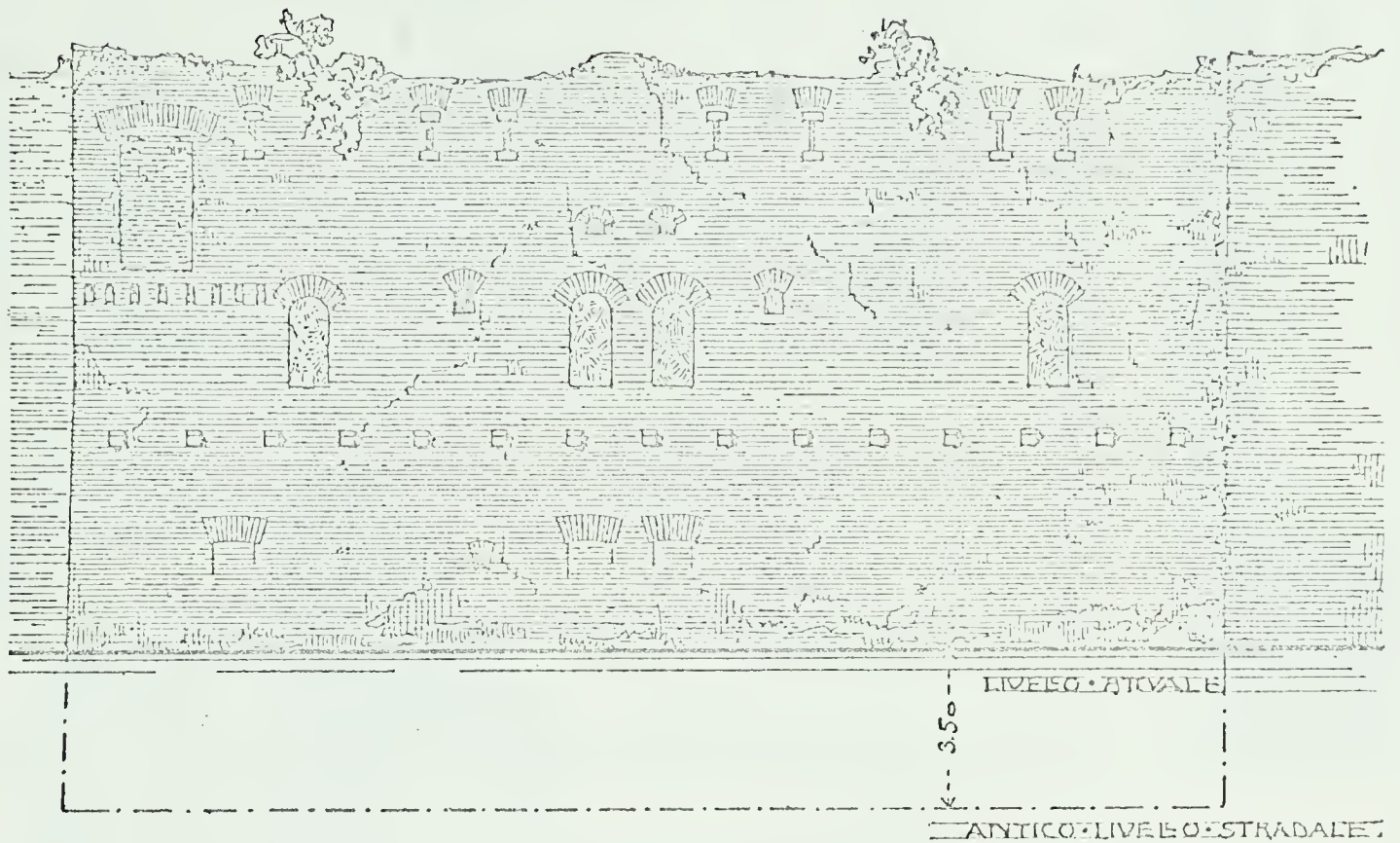


Fig. 5.1. Facade of a Roman insula incorporated into the Aurelian wall, north of the Porta Tiburtina.

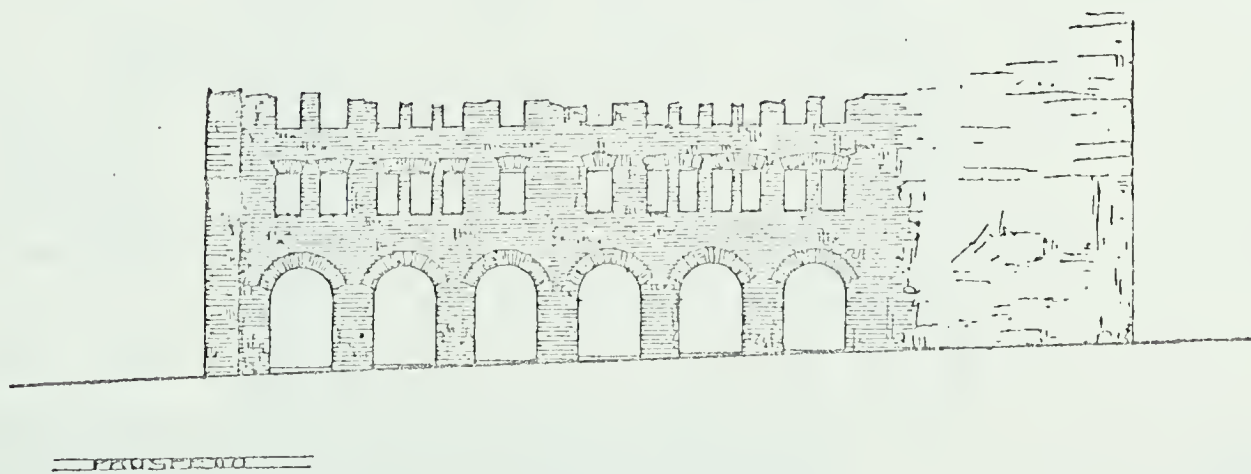
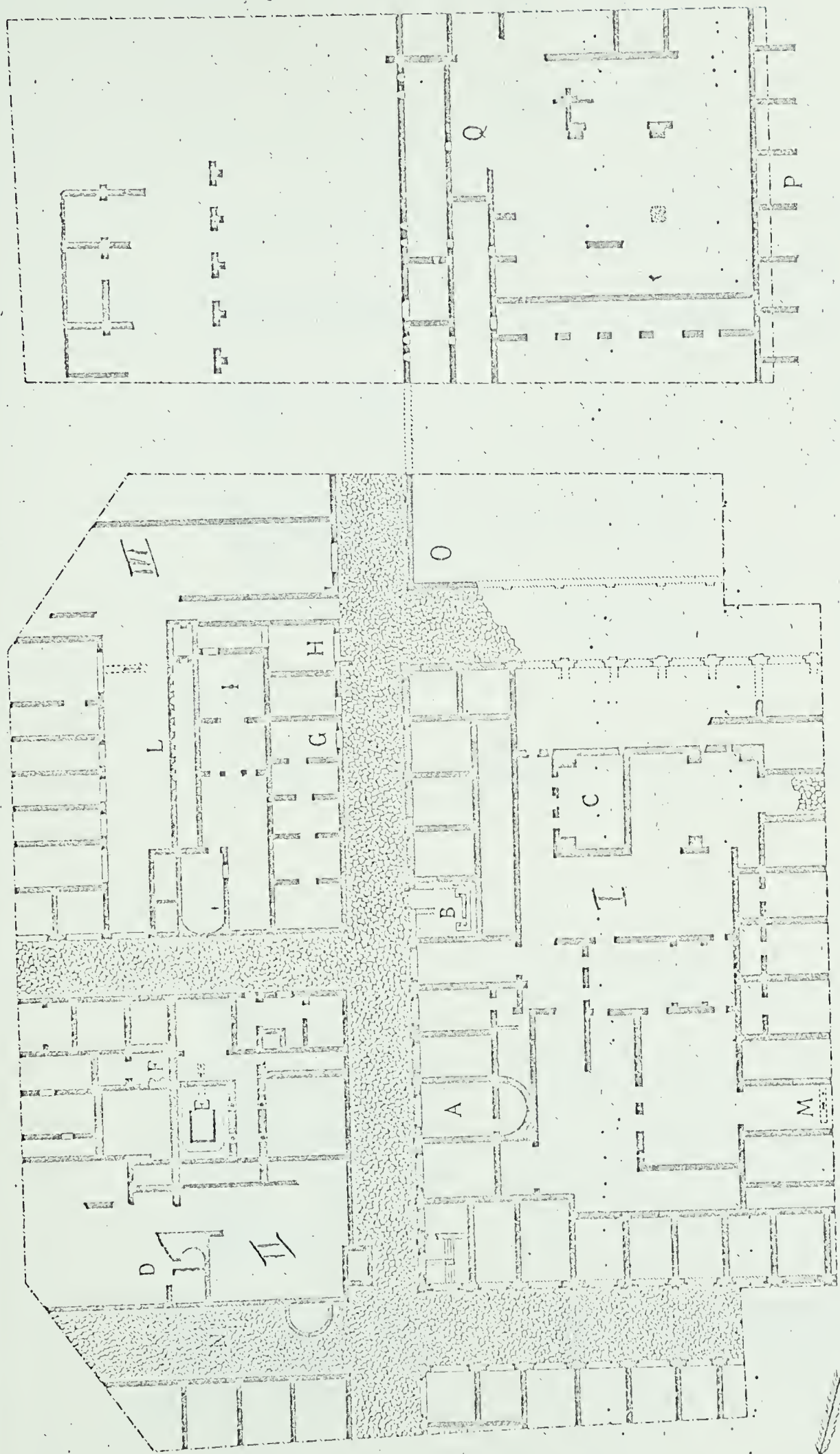


Fig. 5.2. Casa dei SS. Giovanni e Paolo.



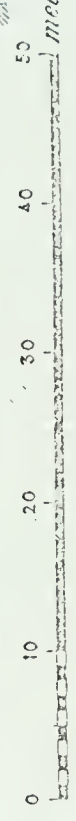
VIA DEL TRITONE

CORSO

(VIA FLAMINIA)

UMBERTO I°

PIAZZA COLONNA



Elgati 1916

Fig. 5.3. SCAVI DI PIAZZA COLONNA

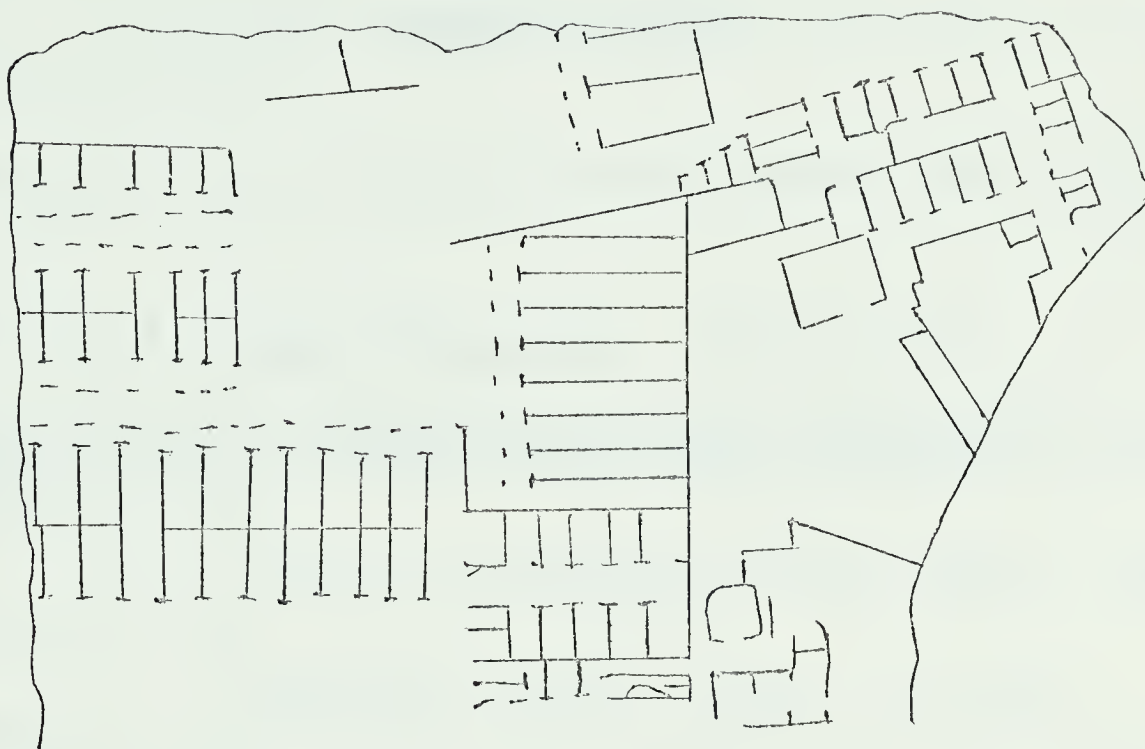


Fig. 5.4. A fragment of the Forma Urbis.

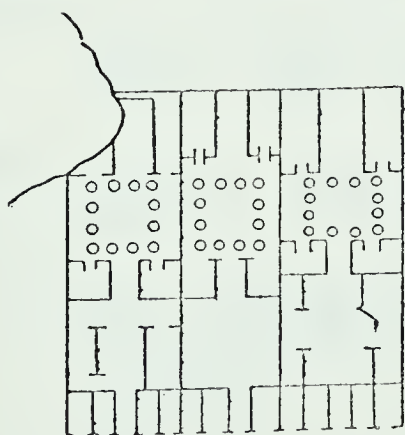


Fig. 5.5. Forma Urbis (frag. 173) showing the peristyle house.



Fig. 5.6. A fragment of the Forma Urbis, depicting an insula with a row of shops along both facades.

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